

An Admirable  
**TREATISE**  
OF  
**Solid Vertue,**  
Unknown to the  
**Men of this Generation:**

WHO

Take the Appearance of Vertue, for the True  
Vertue taught by Jesus Christ, in these Words;  
*Learn of me, for I am Meek, and Lowly, and Hum-  
ble in Heart;* and in the other saving Instructions  
which he hath given for True Christians.

IN

**Twenty Four LETTERS**

TO A

Young Man, who sought after the Perfection  
of his Soul:

*Teaching him, That it consists in the Knowledge of our  
Selves, and in the Mortification of our Five Natural Senses.*

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**PART I.**

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By *ANTONIA BOURIGNON.*

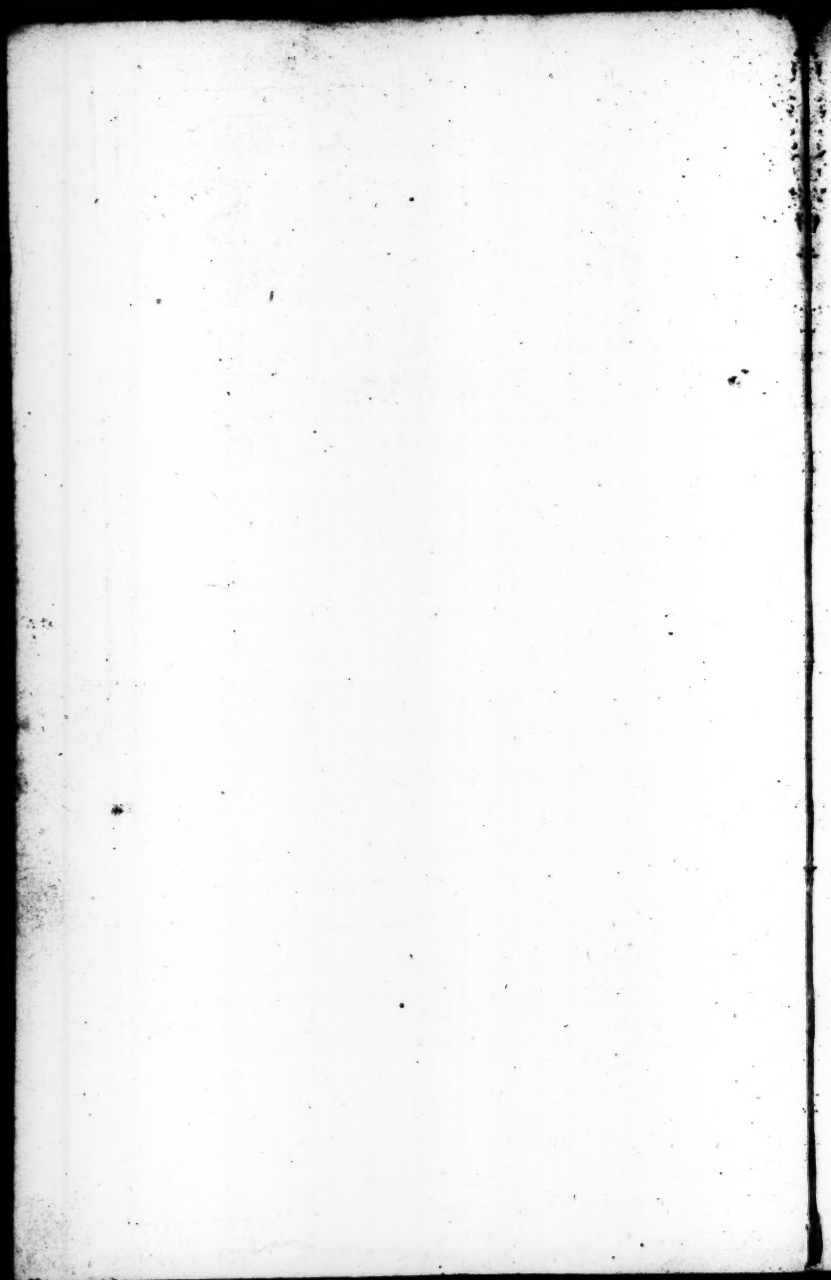
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## TO THE English Reader.

**A**S substantial and solid things are often counterfeited, and the appearance of them passes for the reality and substance, so it is of Vertue, the most excellent Quality that the Soul of Man can be endued with. There is then a False and Seeming Vertue, which has only the out-side, the mien, and the appearance of it; and there is True and Solid Vertue.

The False and Seeming Vertue is that which passes most current in the World, and as one has most ingeniously made appear, all the things that generally go in the World for Vertue, are only the fine Effects of Pride and Self-love. D. of Rochefoucault's Moral Reflections.

This Counterfeit Vertue has a Property peculiar to it; that whereas in all other false shews, Men desire only to impose upon and deceive others, in this we are content also to deceive our selves, and are well pleas'd to think our selves Vertuous, and that what we do is the effect of real Vertue, when in truth it is not.

Yet nevertheless, this false and seeming Vertue meets with more honour and regard from Men, than that which is true and solid; it does not at all contradict the strongest Inclinations of Corrupt Nature, it serves to sooth and flatter them, and lets Men see how to gratifie them with Honour and Reputation in the World. Whereas the other, being an utter Enemy to Corrupt Nature, is hated, dispis'd, and persecuted by it, and especially they who are most oblig'd by Office, Interest, or Inclination to appear Vertuous, do too commonly most hate and malign it; for it takes off their Mask, it discovers them to themselves, and lays them open to others, *Men love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil. For every one that doth Evil, hateth the Light; neither cometh he to the Light, least his Deeds should be reprov'd.* John 3. 20.

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To apply this to the present Age would be thought a Satyr upon it, but no body will be offended to make it appear from palpable Instances of remoter Times. The most perfect Pattern and Exemplar of True and Solid Ver-

rue, was Jesus Christ, he being the *true*  
\* *Aug. de Doctr. Light*, \* Truth and Vertue it self cloa-  
*Chr. l. i. c. 13.* thed with Flesh, to manifest the same

to us, as we do our Thoughts to others by cloathing them with Words. He liv'd among sinful Men as God would live if he were Man; for so he was *God manifested in the Flesh*: And yet never any Man was more despis'd than he, and none hated him more than the Priests and Elders, the Scribes and Pharisees; and they never thought themselves at ease and in safety, till they had got him put to Death as a Malefactor, a Blasphemer, and Seducer of the People. But these on the other hand, were had in Reputation for Men of great Vertue and Righteousness; their Example and Belief was a Standard for others to walk by. *Have any of the Scribes or Pharisees believed on him?* They would pay Tithes even to the least of their Encrease, and would hallow the most Villainous Actions with a Zeal for God and the Publick Good.

One of the Occasions of Disputes and Mistakes among Men; is, that they split and divide the Truth, one side catching at one part of it, and the other at another, and they mingle it with Falshood and Errors, as appears in the present Subject. Some give such Idea's of Christianity, as if Morality and Vertue had a small or no Place in it, and they can scarce endure to hear their Names; others do so represent it, as if its great Business were to introduce a Morality and Vertue like that of the Heathen Philosophers. Both sides may be said to be both in the Right and in the Wrong. The former is in the Right, in making Christianity a more excellent thing than what passes in the World for Vertue and Morality, but they are much in the Wrong, in not giving True Vertue its due place in it: The latter are in the Right, in making Vertue so Essential a part of Christianity; but they are in much in the Wrong, in giving a Character of it like that of the Philosophers.

As Light not only discovers it self, but all other things, so is it of Truth; and therefore false and apparent Vertue is best discern'd by understanding what True Vertue is.

Vertue and Vice then are inward Dispositions of the Heart and Soul, and all our outward Actions are only the effects  
and

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and indications of them. The great Principle by which the Soul is led and determin'd in all its Actions, is its *Love*, and whithersoever *Love* tends, thither the Soul is carried. It is the same to the Soul that *Gravity* is to Bodies, as *Augustine* doth most excellently represent it. *Corpus pondere* l. 13. c. 9. Aug. Confession.

*suo nititur, ad locum suum. Pondus non ad imatantum est, sed ad locum suum. Ignis sursum tendit, deorsum Lapis. Ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. Oleum infra aquam fusum, supra aquam attollitur: Aqua supra oleum fusa, infra oleum demergitur: Ponderibus suis aguntur, loca sua petunt. Minus ordinata inquieta sunt, ordinantur & quiescunt. Pondus meum amor meus, eo feror, quocunque feror.*

A Body, says he, by its weight tends to its own Place. Weight is not only a tendency downwards, but to its own Place. Fire tends upwards, a Stone downwards; they are acted by their Weights, they tend to their own Places. Oil poured in below Water, ascends above the Water: Water poured in above Oil, sinks below the Oil. They are acted by their Gravities; they tend to their own Places. Those that are out of order are restless; when they are in order they rest. My Weight is my Love; by it am I carried whithersoever I am carried. So that according to the bent and tendency of Love, the Soul is either Vertuous or Vicious.

The Essence then of True Vertue consists in the Love of God, and the Essence of Vice in turning away our Love and our Affections from God, and placing them on our selves, or on other Creatures. A thing may be loved and desired for it self, or it may be loved not for it self, but for some greater Good that it leads to. Again,

there is a great difference between the using of a thing, and the enjoying of it. *Fruition* and *Enjoyment*, is, when we delight and take pleasure, and rest in the thing that we love for it self, and do not refer it as a mean to some further end: The using of a thing is, when we seek and make use of it only in order to some further Good that we would enjoy; as we do Physick for Health. Now True Vertue is to desire and love nothing for it self but God, and other things only in and for him; and if we love and desire any Creature for it self, we make that our God. We love our selves aright, when we love God with all our Hearts, and so wish to our

Aug. Soliloq. l. 1.

c. 13. Quod non propter se amatur, non amatur.

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selves the greatest Good ; and we must love our Neighbours as our selves, that is, as his Images, and to endeavour to bring them with our selves to the Knowledge and Love of God. And all other things we ought to desire and use ultimately, only in order to this end, and always seek or avoid them as we find them Helps or Hindrances to the Love of God.

Again, we must not rest and delight in the Enjoyment and Possession of any thing for it self but

Aug. *d. Doctr.* God ; we ought to use other things only in so far as they are means and helps for the Love and Enjoyment of God.  
*Chr. l. 1. c. 3,*  
*4, 5.*

God alone is to be enjoy'd ; and other things to be used. But if we rest and delight in any other thing for it self, we make that our God. All the Creatures of God are good ; but they are made for our Use and not for Enjoyment : But when we rest and delight in them for themselves, we pervert their end, and that order of things which God has establish'd in the World. And herein consists the Iniquity and the Vice of Men, that they enjoy those things which they should only use, to wit, the Creatures ; and use what they should enjoy, to wit, God. All the Creatures of God are good in their own order and kind ; but our Love and Delight in them is Evil. Money is good ; but the Love of Money is Covetousness. Meat and Drink are useful and necessary for the support of our Bodies ; but to desire and delight in them for themselves, and their gustful Relish, is Voluptuousness. Marriage is necessary for the Preservation of Humane kind ; but to desire it for Carnal Pleasure is Lust. Rule and Government is needful for the Peace and Order of Societies ; but to affect it, and aspire after it, is Ambition. Praise is Good ; but to desire and delight in it is Vain-glory. Knowledge and Learning are great Advantages ; but to desire and delight in them for themselves, to know that we may know, is Curiosity and the Lust of the Eye. Any Excellency either of Body or Mind, any outward Advantage of Wealth, or Reputation, or Greatness, is the Gift of God ; but to hug and value our selves for it, is Pride. And thus also the delighting in Vertue for it self, as our great Excellency, and the great Perfection of our Mind, as that which makes us noble and excellent Creatures, and raises us far above the Beasts, and the common rank of Mortals, is certainly no less Pride, than the delighting in or valuing our selves for any other Endowment either of Body or Mind : For Pride consists in the Love of any Excellency or Advantage for which a Man

\* or Vanity.

esteems

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esteems himself, and in which he rests and takes Complacency.

And as Men sin and are vicious in enjoying what they ought to use, so also in using what they ought to enjoy, while they serve and worship God, not for himself, but for some other end. They fear and dread his Wrath, and therefore they think to appease him by their little Services; or they are in some Affliction and Trouble, and they worship and pray to him that he may deliver them; or they are desirous of some Worldly Blessings which they want, or the Continuance of what they have, and they think it their Interest to have him their Friend, who can bestow and preserve them; or they wish in the general to be for ever happy, and they hear it is God alone who can bestow this Happiness upon them, and therefore they pay him Homage and Service to oblige him to it; but in all this they make use of God for other ends; whereas the Enjoyment of him ought to be the great End of all our Desires, Services, and Endeavours. He alone is the supream Good, in him only is our True Happiness; he alone ought to be desir'd, lov'd, and rested in, for himself; all other things ought to be us'd or avoided, according as they are means or hindrances to this; he alone is to be enjoyed.

Again, God ought not only to be the *End* which we desire and aim at, but also the *End for which* we desire and love him: We are ready to make our selves the *last End for which* we love and desire all other things, and so we make use of God only as a means for our own Happiness. That *for which* we desire and love any thing, has the place in our Love and Affection before that which we desire for it. Thus we enthrone and deifie our selves, to whom not only all the Creatures, but also God himself, must bow; and we look on him under no other Notion, but as one capable of making us Happy; but we ought to regard him as the Sovereign Lord of all, the eternal Truth and supream Goodness, to whom all Creatures must do Homage, and unto whom we ought to refer our selves and our Love of him, as to our last End, and as the greatest Homage we can give him; we ought, to love and rejoyce in the Enjoyment of God which is our greatest Happiness, not making that our *last End for which* we do it, that we may be Happy; but we may entirely sub-ject all that we have and are, and so make a whole Burnt-Offering of our selves as it were to our God and Sovereign, the supream Truth and Good, to whom it is most fit that

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all Creatures be entirely subjected. This we will understand the better, if we consider for what end it is, that we ought to desire and endeavour that our Neighbours may love God with all their Souls: Their Happiness and Felicity is not the last End for which we ought to desire and endeavour this, tho' we know this to be their Happiness, (else there would be as many last Ends as there are reasonable Creatures in the World) but that God may be glorified in all, that all his Creatures may yield up themselves to him, to whom all Dominion over all, and the Service of all, does of right belong, that so God may be all in all. Now we are to love our Neighbours as our selves, and therefore God ought to be the last End for which we and all reasonable Creatures are to desire and love him, that he may reign over all.

This Love of God does not consist in a meer sensible Devotion, but such a Love of him in his Nature, and as he is in himself, as makes us still tend to be transform'd into his Image and Partakers of his Divine Nature: Our Saviour, *Matt. 23.* reproaches the Scribes and Pharisees for their garnishing the Sepulchres of the Prophets whom their Fathers killed, as if they had had a great Love and Veneration for them; while in the mean time they kill'd the Wise Men and Prophets, that God was then sending among them, tho' they were of the same Spirit and Temper; and therefore they would have done the like to them if they had lived in their Days; so that they did not truly Love and Honour those Prophets, but only Idols of their own making; even as Men use to have a great Veneration and Esteem for others, who live at a distance, and of whom they hear many things spoken to their Advantage, and particularly of their Love and Esteem for them: But yet they are of so different and so contrary Natures and Tempers, that should they come to live and converse together, they would have a real Aversion for those whom they seem thus to Venerate at a distance. Thus there are many who think they desire, and love, and honour God, while they really hate his Nature, and worship only an Idol of their own making. They frame to themselves some Object of their Piety and Devotion; they look upon God only under the Notion of one who has done great things for them, and loves them dearly, and will bring them to a Kingdom, and therefore they worship and adore him; while in the mean time, there is nothing they have a greater Aversion to, than to be like him in his Nature. How sadly



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sadly do we deceive our selves, to think we love God, because our Hearts are touch'd with a sensible Devotion toward some Object of Piety, while in the mean time we do not love Righteousness, Goodness, nor Truth; we are ready to deal unjustly with our Neighbour, to indulge our sensual Appetites, to speak against the Truth; for God is Love, and Righteousness, and Purity, and Goodness and Truth, and if we do not love and desire to be Partakers of this Divine Nature, we do not love and desire God.

To love God then, is to contemplate with delight, and desire this Sun of Righteousness, to cleave to this eternal and unchangeable Rule of Truth and Goodness, with a firm and steady Resolution, and constant Bent of forming our Minds according to it, that we may be Partakers of the Divine Nature, as the Air receives the Sun's Light and Heat. It is not to delight in our own Wisdom and Goodness, as Qualities and Endowments of our Minds, for this is Self-love and Pride to be tickled with the Excellencies of our own Spirits; but to adhere in Love and Affection to the unchangeable Pattern and Original of Wisdom, Truth, and Righteousness, which in all our Changes is always the same. If we adhere to it, we become thereby Just and Righteous, as the Earth is enlightn'd and heated by the Sun; and if we stray from it, we become unrighteous and foolish, as the Earth turn'd away from the Sun becomes dark and cold: We become better or worse by cleaving to or receding from it, but it does not receive thereby any Addition or Diminution. But if we do not love and adhere to Righteousness and Truth; if we wish there were no Justice to punish Sin, no Law to forbid the Enjoyment of the Creatures, and the setting our Heart on them, the speaking against the Truth, the doing to others what we would not have done to our selves, or the loving our selves as our last End; if we turn away from this Law both in Love and Practice, whatsoever sensible Devotion we may feel and pretend to, yet certainly we do not love God.

That the Love of God is the Essence of Vertue, can, I think, be denied by none who own themselves Christians, since the Religion of Jesus Christ requires, that we *love God with all our Souls, with all our Hearts, with all our Strength, and with all our Mind*, and tells us, that the highest Acts of Vertue, without this are nothing. In it are comprehended all Vertues, and they are nothing else but the Love of God, expressing it self in different ways, according to different Circum-

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Aug. de Moribus  
Eccl. Cathol. l. 1.  
c. 15.

Circumstances. Thus saith Aug. Quod  
virtus ad beatam vitam nos ducit, nihil  
omnino esse virtutem affirmaverim, nisi  
summum Amorem Dei. Namque illud  
quod quadripartita dicitur Virtus, exipsis  
amoris vario quodam affectu, quantum intelligo, dicitur. Itaque  
illas quatuor virtutes, quarum utinam ita sit in mentibus vis,  
ut nomina in ore sunt omnium, sic etiam definire non dubitem:  
ut temperantiam dicamus esse amorem, Deo sese integrum incor-  
ruptumque servantem: Fortitudinem amorem omnia propter  
Deum facile perferentem: Justitiam Amorem Deo tantum ser-  
vientem, & ob hoc bene imperantem ceteris quæ homini subjecta  
sunt: Prudentiam amorem bene Discernentem ea quibus adju-  
vetur in Deum, ab iis quibus impediri

Aug. Macedonio  
de Vera felicitate  
Epist. l. 11.

potest. And elsewhere: In hac visa vir-  
tus non est nisi diligere quod diligendum  
est. Id eligere prudentia est; nullis inde  
averti molestiis, fortitudo est; nullis ille-  
cebus, Temperantia est; nulla superbia, Justitia est. 'If  
' Vertue, says he, lead us to Blessedness, I will declare that  
' nothing is Vertue, but the greatest Love of God: For  
' that which is called a four-fold Vertue, is so called, so far  
' as I conceive it, from the different Dispositions of Love;  
' and therefore as to those Four Vertues, the Power of which  
' I wish were as prevalent in Mens Minds, as their Names  
' are often in their Mouths; I make no scruple to define  
' them so, as to call Temperance, Love preserving it self en-  
' tire and pure for God: Fortitude, Love enduring all things  
' willingly for God: Righteousness, Love serving God only,  
' and so ruling aright over the rest which are subjected to  
' Man: Prudence, Love discerning rightly those things by  
' which it is advanced towards God, from these by which it  
' may be hindred. And again, In this Life, says he, there is  
' no Vertue but in loving what ought to be loved. To  
' make this Choice, is Prudence; not to be diverted from it  
' by any Troubles, is Fortitude; nor by any Enticements  
' and Pleasures, is Temperance; nor by any Pride, is Justice.  
The true Love of God then does comprehend all Vertues,  
it being the Spring and Fountain, and they the Streams which  
flow from it, according to the different Objects and Circum-  
stances of our Actions. And as we see in Animals and living  
Creatures, tho' this or that particular Action may be coun-  
terfeited by mechanical Contrivances and Motions; yet the  
whole Frame and System with all its Motions, can neither  
be

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be form'd nor guided without an inward Principle and Spring of Life, which surpasses all the Mechanism of the World; so tho' this or that particular Vertue may be acted or imitated, yet there can be no True Vertue, nor a constant Uniformity of it in the Soul and Life, without this Divine Principle of Charity.

This preserves that Order of things that God has establish'd in the World, and the contrary Disposition, is the ranversing of that Order.

*Aug. de quantitate Anime, c. 126. idem, de Vera Relig. c. 20.*  
*Deus summus & Verus lege inviolabili & incorrupta, quâ omne quod condidit, regit, subjicit animæ corpus, animam sibi, & sic omnia sibi.* — *Est igitur quoddam bonum, quod si diligit anima rationalis, peccat, quia infra illam ordinatum est.*

The Great and True God by that inviolable Law by which he governs all that he has made, has subjected the Body to the Soul, and the Soul to himself, and so all things to himself. — There is therefore a certain Good, which if the reasonable Soul love, it Sins, because it is placed below it.

God only is Self-sufficient, but no Creature is so; all things do as it were stand in need of Aliment, without which their Natures are not perfected. Our Eyes are fed with Light, our Ears with Sounds, our Understanding and Will with Truth and Goodness; and being boundless Capacities, they are created to adhere to the eternal and unchangeable Truth and Goodness, as the Earth is to turn all its sides to be warm'd, enlightned, quickned, and made fruitful by the Sun. To make a Man his own last End, that he should love himself for himself, and not for God, is inconsistent with the unchangeable Righteousness and Goodness of God, since Man has no Goodness or Subsistence of himself, but what he derives entirely from the Goodness of God. It is impossible that a Man can find his Happiness in himself; the Mind of Man cannot support it self. Its Felicity and Happiness must be by its Knowledge and its Love. Now would that make a Man happy, think you, only to know and love himself? The Soul is of a vast Capacity, and unless its Capacities be fill'd, it can never be satisfied, it will still have an unquenchable Thirst. Nothing but God, boundless Goodness, and Truth, can fill its Capacities, and satisfy its Understanding, and its Love.

To make Man for to love and enjoy material Beings, as his last End, were to make the better for the worse, to design a noble Creature for an End more base and ignoble than its self,

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self, which infinite Wisdom and Goodness can never do. Yet Man now in his fallen Estate, seeing nothing but Emptiness and Misery in himself, seeks for Happiness among the Creatures, and knocks at every Door, and when he finds it not in one thing he runs to another. *Projicit*

Aug. Confess.

*se foras Miserabiliter scalpi avida constantu sensibulum*; but this serves but to

encrease his Misery. It may well keep his Mind in a vain Amusement, make him forget his true Misery, and neglect the means to get out of it; but this is like the Happiness of a mad Man, who sports himself with Knives and Daggers, and wounds his Flesh, and knocks his Head, and does not feel the present smart of it. The Love and Pursuit of the Creatures do blind and darken his Understanding, rob him of true Liberty, and make him their Slave and Captive; pollute and defile his Mind, and make it as unstable as Water, and torment it with a Thousand Passions, every Disappointment and Trouble from without raising a Storm within. And tho' Man's imaginary Happiness and Contentment in any of the Creatures, were never so great, yet either they flee away from him, or he is torn from them; Death comes and strips him of all, rends him from all the Objects of his Desires at once, and so leaves him empty and miserable for ever.

Aug. de Vera Relig. c. 20. & 21.

*Si corporea Creatura diligatur ab anima qua negligit Deum, sit penalis dilectoris suo & eum implicat arumnis, & pascit fallacibus Voluptatibus; quia neque permanent, neque satiant, sed torquent doloribus.* — *Temporalium specierum multiformitas, ab unitate Dei hominem Lapsam per carnales Sensus diverberavit, & mutabili varitate multiplicavit ejus affectum. Ita facta est abundantia laboriosa, & si decet potest, copiosa egestas, dum aliud & aliud sequitur, & nihil cum eo permanet.* ' If

' the Corporeal Creatures be loved by a Soul which forgets  
' its God, they become a Punishment to their Lover, and  
' involve him in Vexation, and feed him with deceitful Plea-  
' sures, for they neither abide, nor satisfy, but torture him  
' with Pains. — The multiplicity of Temporal things has  
' struck off fallen Man from the Unity of God by his Carnal  
' Senses, and by their changeable Variety they have multi-  
' plied his Affections. So their abundance is become Toil-  
' some, and, if it may be so said, a copious Want, while one  
' thing comes upon the back of another, and nothing abides  
' with him.

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It is evident, then that the Essence of True Vertue, is the Love of God. But now Man in his lapsed Estate has turned away his Love from God, and plac'd it on himself and on the Creatures; the utmost Good he pursues for, is the Delight and Satisfaction that is to be obtain'd from the Creatures, and the last End for which he seeks. it is to please and gratifie himself; and by his Corrupt Nature he is become so brutal, that he neither knows his true last End, nor does he desire to seek after it, neither can he himself return to it. Man would never have sought after his God, if ~~he~~ had not sought after him. *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to die for us.* There is no true saving Knowledge of God, but by Jesus Christ. Man cannot now attain to True Vertue, and return to the Love of God, but by him. 'The *Pensees de Mr.*

' Knowledge of God, (as one says) with- *Pascal, Tir. 20.*  
' out that of our Misery, makes Pride;  
' the Knowledge of our Misery, without that of Jesus Christ,  
' makes Despair: But the Knowledge of Jesus Christ deli-  
' vers us both from Pride and Despair, because in him we  
' find God, our Misery, and the only way to be delivered  
' from it. The Divinity of the Christians does not con-  
' sist in a God who is, simply, the Author of Geometrical  
' Truths, and of the Order of the Elements, that is, the Por-  
' tion of the Heathens. It does not simply consist in a  
' God who exercises his Providence over the Life and Goods  
' of Men, to bless those who worship him, with a happy  
' Course of Years; this is the Portion of the Jews. But the  
' God of *Abraham* and *Jacob*, the God of the Christians, is  
' a God of Love and Consolation: He is a God who fills the  
' Soul and Heart of those whom he possesses: He is a God  
' who makes them feel inwardly their Misery, and his infi-  
' nite Mercy; who unites himself to the bottom of their  
' Soul; who fills it with Humility, Joy, Confidence, and  
' Love; who renders them incapable of any other End but  
' himself.

' The God of the Christians, is a God who makes the Soul  
' feel that he is its only Good, that all its Rest is in him, and  
' that it will have no Joy but in loving him; and who at the  
' same time makes it abhor the Obstacles which with-hold  
' and hinder it from loving him with all ~~its~~ Strength. Self-  
' love and Concupiscence which do hinder it, are insuppor-  
' table to it. This God makes it feel, that it has that Fond  
' of Self-love, and that he only can cure it.

Jesus

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Jesus Christ then our Mediator and Redeemer having obtain'd for us Pardon and Grace, and being come to recover Man again to the Love of God, has shewn him the way how to attain to it, and how to withstand and overcome the Obstacles and Hindrances of it. He has shewn us how far we are gone astray from God, and that therefore a Life of Penitence, and not of Pleasure, is necessary for us. The Love of the Creatures has turn'd away our Love from God, and he is come to shew us how to take off our Hearts from them; our Entanglements among them do defile us as Pitch does the Hands, and he shews us how to get free of them. Self-love has taken place of the Love God, and he learns us how to deny our selves; and to all this he

Aug. *de Vera Relig.* c. 16.

*Satellites voluptatum divitias perniciose populi appetebant; pauper esse voluit: Honoribus & imperijs inhiabant; rex fieri noluit. Carnales suos filios magnum bonum putabant; tale conjugium prolemque contempsit. Contumelias superbissime horrebant; omne genus contumeliarum sustinuit. Injurias intolerabiles esse arbitrabantur; quæ major injuria quam justum innoctemque Damnari? Dolores corporis execrabantur; flagellatus, atque cruciatus est. Mori metuebant, morte multatus est. Ignominiosissimum mortis genus Crucem putabant; crucifixus est. Omnia, quæ habere cupientes non recte vivebamus, carendo vilia fecit. Omnia, quæ vitare cupientes a studio deviabamus veritatis, perpeiendo dejecit. Non enim ullum peccatum committi potest, nisi dum appetuntur ea quæ ille contempsit, aut fugiuntur quæ ille sustinuit. Tota itaque vita ejus in terris per hominem quem suscipere dignatus est, disciplina morum fuit.*

The People greedily covet Riches which minister to Pleasures; Jesus Christ would needs be Poor. They gaped for Honours and Power; he would not be a King. They thought their Children, according to the Flesh, a great Happiness; he contemn'd both such Marriage and Off-spring. They most proudly did abhor Reproaches; he suffered all manner of Reproaches, they thought Injuries intolerable. What greater Injury than for the Just and Innocent to be condemn'd? They dreaded all bodily Pains, he was scourged and tormented; they were afraid to die, he is punished with Death; they judg'd the Cross to be the most ignominious kind of Death, he is crucified. All the things, which while we covet them, do keep us from living well, he render'd them vile and contemptible, in that he would not have them. All

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the things which, while we desire to avoid them, do make us wander from the way of Truth, he by Suffering overcame them. For no Sin can be committed, but either in coveting the things which he condemn'd, or in fleeing from the things which he suffer'd. His whole Life therefore on Earth as Man, which he was pleas'd to assume, was a School of Vertue.

Thus we see in Man's fallen State, all the necessary means of receiving the Love of God, are all Vertues; and the Laws and Life of Jesus Christ containing all those necessary means, they point out to us all the real Vertues, without which a Man cannot return to the Love of God. Vertue in Man's lapsed and recoverable State, is a firm Disposition of Soul, whereby it tends in Opposition<sup>to</sup> its Self, and to the World; the Allurements and Discouragements of both, to recover the Love of God.

From the Knowledge of True Vertue we may discern wherein false and apparent Vertue does consist; it is Concupiscence, Pride and Self-love, the Love of the Creatures, and the Esteem and Love of ones self; disguised with the Garments of Vertue, it puts on as many different outward Appearances, as Men have different Interests and Designs to act in the World; we may speak well of Vertue, and have true Notions of it, and yet retain the Truth in Unrighteousness; we may profess greatly to love and honour Jesus Christ, the great Exemplar of it, and yet have the Bent of our Heart and Life still contrary to his; we may speak humbly of our selves, and that from the greatest Pride; we may bestow our Goods upon the Poor, and give our Bodies to be ~~used~~ for Religion, and yet have no Charity. If we still follow our own Wills; if we still seek to please our selves, and gratifie our Appetites, or to please Men; if our Hearts and Desires go still after Temporal things, it is certain, whatever Appearances we may have, we have no True Vertue, we do not aspire to the Love of God. But if we truly deny our selves, if we seek only to please God, if the Bent of our Hearts and Desires be after things Eternal, this is indeed to tend to the Love of God.

What false Notions do those give of Vertue who bottom it on another Foundation? Some have made the Principle of Self-preservation, and Self-love, the great Law of Nature, and the primary Rule into which all Vertue is to be resolved. This the great Debaucher of Morality and Religion, in this Age, has with a strange Boldness advanced in the Christian World,



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*it* World, and it being so well suited to the Corrupt Inclinations of Men, ~~he~~ has not wanted many Abettors, for it serves greatly to sooth and flatter the Corrupt Nature of Man, tho' there is nothing more contrary to the Nature of True Vertue. Self-preservation is a Right allow'd by God, and lawful in it self, but in order to some further End; for he hath given us a Being, that we may love and enjoy him; and we ought to study the Preservation of our Being, and the Employment of it for this End. But when we make our Self-preservation our last End, and love and desire all other things only for our selves, this is that very Corrupt State we are fallen into; and to make this to be the Principle of True Vertue, is to call Vice, Vertue; Evil, Good; and Darkness, Light.

Some form to themselves such Notions of Vertue as may best sute with the present State of Corrupt Nature; they grant a Man ought to live according to the Principles of Honesty, Justice, and Temperance; they form to themselves such a System of it as the Civil Laws seem to chalk out to us, which is well calculated for the Peace and Prosperity of Civil Societies; but for such Rules of Vertue as do presuppose a horrid Corruption of Humane Nature, and an absolute Necessity of denying our own Wills, and all worldly Affections, and of bending our whole Desires to God, and to things Eternal, they look upon as a System of Vertue more fitted for Speculation than for Practice, and not at all calculated for the present State of Mankind. Indeed, if we believe that a Man going out of the Body vanishes into nothing, it might be allowed that the Good of Humane Society, and the Conveniencies of Humane Life, are the only things to be looked to; and that Vertue is only to be measured by that End. But if we believe an Eternity, that Man shall live for ever; that the Soul can be happy only in enjoying God; that we cannot enjoy him without loving him; that this present Life is given us to prepare for that; and that, according to our present Nature we live only to the World, and not to our selves; and so without mortifying and doing Violence to that Nature, we cannot recover the Love of God; then certainly such Vertues as the Laws and Life of Jesus Christ do recommend to us, are indispensably necessary to bring us to God.

It may perhaps deserve also to be considered, what caution ought to be had in recommending either to our selves or others, the pursuit and practice of Vertue, and the Duties of Religion from Temporal Motives and Considerations, such as  
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our Health, our Weath, our Reputation, and the like; which has been of late the Subject of many Sermons. In the First Ages of the World, when Mens Hearts were not so much set upon the things of this World, when the most Rich and Wealthy disdain'd not to do mean Services to themselves and others; and in the midst of their Affluence liv'd still as Strangers and Pilgrims in the World, it was no wonder that God encouraged their Services by Promises and abundance of worldly Blessings, as an accessory Felicity, and to keep them still sensible how he was the Wise Disposer of all by his Providence, tho' then they were required still to love him with all their Hearts, and even the Good were often destitute of all worldly Comforts, and under heavy Calamities. But when the Degeneracy of the World encreas'd, and Mens Hearts became more wedded to earthly Riches, Pleasures, and Honours, Vying with one another who should exceed in them, God saw it Necessary to shew them, that they must learn to deny themselves in all these, and take up their Cross, and prepare to meet with nothing in the World but Reproaches, and Persecutions, for Righteousness sake. And therefore, tho' it may serve sometimes to take off some of our sensual Prejudices against Vertue and Religion, when we see and it is made appear, that for the most part, they are not such Enemies even to our Temporal Comfort, as Vice and Impiety are; yet to rest in this, to make this the great Motive of our serving God, is to love and seek Christ for Loaves, to honour the greatest Good, not for it self, but that we may enjoy a Trifle, and to worship and adore God, not for himself, but that he may give us the Creatures.

Some are ready to say, that there are who screw up Vertue to too great a pitch, such as Humane Nature is not now capable of, and so do thereby rather discourage than animate Men to aspire after it. Such may be pleas'd to consider, that the Law of the Gospel, and the Example of Jesus Christ, is the Standard of True Vertue, and if any recommend a Vertue different from these, they are not to be regarded. God requires of us a Vertue according to the Capacities he has given us, to love him with all our Hearts, and all our Souls, and all our Mind, and all our Strength, and we ought not to hearken to the Suggestions of Corrupt Nature, that will tell us, this cannot be done. Vertue in its utmost Perfection must not be diminished, because every one cannot attain to that Perfection; and to set bounds to it, and say, Hither will I come and no further, is not the way of True Love: There are  
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different Degrees of Attainments, even as one Star exceeds another in Glory. And if a Soul be truly and sincerely converted unto God, God will not cast it off, but as a Father pities the Child whom he loves, he will pity and care for it, and guide it to Perfection. Besides, it is in Grace as in Nature; no Body arrives at a full Stature in an Instant, but by degrees; we are first Children, then Youths, and at last Men; tho' the first can neither eat, nor speak, nor walk of themselves, yet by yielding up themselves to their Parents Care, they come by degrees to the Wisdom and Stature of Men, and the Attainments of one Year give them still new Capacities for the Advancements of another. So it is as to the Spiritual Man, and we are assured of the Grace of Jesus Christ to direct and strengthen us: It is in this especially, that our Faith in him must exert it self; tho' Corrupt Nature tells us, there is a Lion in the Way; yet Faith says, *Through Christ that strengthens me, I am able to do all things*; to take the Kingdom of Heaven by force, by resisting and doing Violence to our Corrupt Nature; for all the Difficulty lies there.

And now, Friendly Reader, for your Direction and Encouragement in the Pursuit of True and Solid Vertue, I do earnestly recommend to you, the perusal of this Treatise. The former Treatise of this Author, of the *Light of the World*, which was translated into English, was published with a sincere Intention of stirring up People to labour after the Spirit of True Christianity; but some were pleas'd to entertain it with another Spirit, and to frighten People from looking upon it, by making a terrible Hue-and-Cry of a New Growing Sect, dreadful Heresies, Blasphemy, Idolatry, and what not. I pray God give them Repentance, and lay not this Sin to their Charge. Such as knew well the Purposes contain'd in that Book, and the Persons whom they thus treated, wonder'd what mov'd them to all this Calumny and Spite. It may be, a little time may make appear that there is not the least Ground for any one of their bitter and grievous Accusations. This Treatment was discouraging enough, but we must not weary in well doing, but go on through good Report and ill Report, being hopeful that some may reap Good by them, who shall be pleas'd impartially to consider and read them with their own Eyes, without the use of these Gentlemens Glasses.

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The *First Part* of this Treatise was translated some Years ago by one, now deceas'd, who had the Character of a very Humble, Pious, and Vertuous Person, and who being convinc'd of the Solid Foundations of Vertue, that he found in this Author, beyond what he saw extant in the common Systems of Morality or Divinity, was thence excited to contribute all that was in his Power, that these might be communicated to Persons of Good Will in these Kingdoms, that they might partake with him of the same Advantage. It was publish'd at *Amsterdam*, and now has been thought fit to revise it and to publish both Parts together.

The First Ten Letters, of the *First Part*, are adapted to the planting of Vertue; and all the rest to root out what may hinder its encrease. To recommend Vertue is taken the Precept of him who is the Master and Example of it; by which is made an Introduction, shewing what Vertues we must in the first place embrace, and by what means we must tend to them; which is by Obedience, and renouncing our own Wills to the Meekness, Gentleness, and Humility of Heart of Jesus Christ. The Nature whereof is Solidly explain'd; the Motives, Instruments, and Impediments produced; and the great Reasonableness of Emptying of our selves demonstrated, in order to be possessed with the *Love of God*. In which Love consists the *Essence and Perfection of all Vertue, and all Good*: And alone is able to resist and overcome all the Temptations of Satan, how subtile soever, which are here treated of, as they respect either the Imagination, or the Intellect, or the Will.

The *Second Part* contains the means which are essentially necessary and effectual for the Mortifying of Corrupt Nature, the Recovering of the Love of God, and the Arriving at Life Eternal: And the Example of Christ is here set before us in the whole Process, which is Symbolically presented by Three Bridges. 1. That of *Forsaking the World*. 2. That of *Poverty of Spirit*. And. 3. That of *Renouncing our Wills*. Which last is most largely considered, and earnestly press'd as well in small as in great things. And for the preventing of Mistakes, the Nature and Degrees of Vertue and Vice are clearly stated. There is subjoin'd an accessory Letter, clearing further some Doubts considered in the Sixth Letter, where it is affirm'd, that Jesus Christ took on the Corruption of our Nature, not sin, but the Effects that Sin had brought into our Nature, that his Inferiour Will, not his Superiour, was contrary to the Will of God, and therefore he behov'd to resist and deny it in all things, as he did; and

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that this Contrariety was in sentiment or in the sensitive Nature, but never in Consent. This is so excellently, and fully cleared, both in the Sixth Letter, and in that accessory one, that I shall refer the Reader to them for Satisfaction.

But because some aggravate this Sentiment as inconsistent with the immaculate Purity of Jesus Christ, I shall here only subjoin an Extract out of a private Letter, which serves to clear that matter. *Immaculata puritas Christi est perfecta puritas a peccato, non autem puritas a Consequentibus peccati, quæ animum ac voluntatem mentis nedum maculent, probatum potius reddunt, evehuntque ultra merarum Creaturarum puritatem atque amorem. Si quæstio esset de puritate fructiva, gloriosa, triumphante, ac quousque potest Gloria sua radios diffundente, tunc posset aliquo modo ista locum habere objectio; at agitur de puritate probativa, de puritate quæ sese quantum per purissimi Amoris Dei ac miseri peccatoris conditionem fieri possit, sordibus & impuritatibus peccati onerat, ut illas extinguat & eliminet, peccatoremque inde avellat. Quis negabit Amoris purissimi esse, sensibiles sibi ad versissimas & ingratißimas in se suscipere sentiendas & debellandas quamdiu id necesse est, ut ceteri ab earum captivitate liberrentur?* &c. 'The immaculate Purity of Christ, is a perfect Purity from Sin, not a Purity from the Consequences of Sin, which do not defile the Soul, and the Will of the Mind, but do rather try it, and raise it above the Purity and Love of meer Creatures. If the Question were about a Purity of Enjoyment, a triumphing, glorious Purity, diffusing the Rayes of its Glory as far as it can, this Objection might then have some place; but the Question is about a Purity of Trial, a Purity which, as far as the most pure Love of God, and the miserable State of sinful Man, will allow, charges it self with the filth and impurity of Sin, that it may consume and destroy them, and may pull the Sinner out. Who will deny that the most pure Love may not take upon it Sensibilities most contrary, and most unpleasant to it, to be felt and overcome by it so long as is necessary, that others may be delivered from their Bondage? &c. *Vid Oecon. Div. Part 3. Cap. 2. & Page 21. ad 61.*

Some will not look upon this Book, because it treats of Vertue; they say there is nothing there of Jesus Christ, and of Faith in him. What God has joined, Men ought not to put asunder, or to make a Contrariety between them. True Faith, and Faith in Jesus Christ, is certainly the Divine Principle of Solid Vertue. We are bidden to add to our Faith the  
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other Divine Vertues; and are told, that Faith worketh by Love, and that the End of the Commandment is Charity, and that is the Essence of Vertue. Sure they who shall read this Treatise without an evil Eye, will see that by it we are still directed to Jesus Christ, that he only has merited our Pardon and Favour with God, that it is by his Grace alone that we can do any thing that is well pleasing to God, that his Life and Doctrine is the only Rule we must follow, if we would attain to True Vertue, and arrive at Eternal Life; and it is his Holy Spirit that sheds the Divine Vertues into our Hearts.

Be pleas'd then, Friendly Reader, to peruse this Book with a sincere Resolution, by the Divine Grace, to put the Directions of it in practise, so far as you find them conformable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I can wish you no greater Good, nor the World a greater Blessing of you, than that your Heart and Life be moulded into that Divine Frame. We are all travelling to Eternity, where we profess that we hope to enjoy God; we come into the World with a perfect Contrariety to his Nature; the present time is allotted us to overcome that, and to return to the Love of God, without which we can never enjoy him; much of this time is spent already, and we know not how little remains of it.

And as the Tree falls so shall it lie: Self-love and the Love of the World do possess our Hearts, and while they are there, the Love of God cannot enter. Jesus Christ has shewn us by Word and Deed how to overcome them, and if we follow him, we shall not miss of it; Why then should we quarrel and scoff at one another by the Way? Why should we be taken up only about our different Formalities, and Ideas of things, and Wording of them, which make nothing to the purpose? Why do we place all our Vertue in making or hearing Discourses on the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, in Commenting or Criticizing on it without putting it in practise? Why do we neglect this one thing necessary? Were our Hearts taken off from things Present and Temporal; did we constantly apply to deny our selves, our own Wills, Senses, Appetites, and Passions; did we love the Humility, the Poverty, the Contempt, the Reproaches, and Sufferings of Jesus Christ, we would neither disturb the World with New Sects, of which there are but too many already, nor persecute others who differ'd from us in their Sentiments, but we would find so much Work in the mortifying our own Corrupt Natures, such Beams to pull out of our own Eyes, so much need of Par-



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and Mercy for our own Sins, such variety of Tentations to watch against on all sides, so much Weakness and Propensity to Evil in our selves; and such an Aversion and Backwardness to follow Jesus Christ in a way so contrary to the Maxims and Customs of the World and Nature, as would require and take up all our Care and Vigilance, and make us treat others with the Spirit of Meekness and Charity. *Vigila super teipsum admone teipsum; & quidquid de aliis fit, non negligas teipsum. Tantum proficies, quantum tibi ipsi Vim intuleris* \*. Amen.

\* *Tho. à Kemp. de Imit. Chr.*

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# THE P R E F A C E.

Friendly Reader,

I Cannot chuse but to impart to you Twenty Four Letters, which I wrote to one of my particular Friends ; wherein I make appear to him, what is Solid Vertue : Because it is a Matter so necessary in this present Age ; wherein we see False Vertue bear sway, or that which seems only to be Vertue in Mens Eyes ; and wherein so many deceive themselves, being perswaded that they have True Vertue, when they have nothing but fine Speculations about it. They think they are humble, when they can talk well of Humility ; and think they have the Love of God, when they desire to have it : Nevertheless, they have indeed nothing but Self-love, and it is nothing but Deceit and Lies, when they say they have the Love of God. They do not so much as know the Corruption of their Natures, since they think they may well enough follow this Corruption without sinning, provided they do no Evil reproveable before Men, and that they have the Will to do well and to love God. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient for Salvation ; for good Desires, without effect, are nothing before God. They are indeed Foundation-Stones, which serve for the building of True Vertue ; for without good Desires, we cannot do good Works : We must first have the Desire, and afterwards put it in Execution. This is wanting in many well-disposed Persons, who please themselves that they have a good Will, and with this they hope all shall go well, without considering that the Holy Scripture says to all in general, Depart from Evil, and do Good.

Now the Evil is in our Corrupt Nature, which no Body should be ignorant of. Yet few turn away from this Corruption, and very many love and follow it, thinking they do well ; which is a great Abuse and Presumption of Mind, for

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*we cannot do Good, unless we depart from Evil; and he who does not war against this Corrupt Nature, and renounce it, cannot acquire True Vertue. This few comprehend; and hence it is that they have nothing but Seeming Vertues and no Real ones.*

*This made me resolve to publish those Twenty Four Letters, which treat of True Vertue, that they who aspire to it, may see the State in which they are; as also, if they have acquir'd any Degrees of it; or if their Vertues be only Imaginary.*

*I do not offer this Matter of True Vertue to all in general, since many would find it hard to be observed: For they who do still love themselves or earthly things, could not have their Minds wholly bent to acquire this Vertue; nor tend to the Spiritual Diligence which it requires. But I speak to Souls disengaged, who have left the World to follow Jesus Christ; and such will easily understand me; for none are better disposed to understand me, than they who desire to practise True Vertue. And others who have not this Desire, must content themselves with knowing the Commands of God in general, since they aspire not to a greater Perfection. Therefore I say to them, as St. John to the Soldiers, Do Violence to no Man, Defraud no Man, and be content with your Wages. And this he says to them, because he did not find them disposed for farther Perfection. Moreover every one is free to aim at such a degree of Perfection as he pleases; therefore of Two Evils St. John chuses the least, in Counselling the Soldiers to be content with their Wages, and to do no Violence to no Man: But if the Soldiers had aim'd at Christian Perfection, no doubt St. John would have advised them to cease from being Soldiers, and to forsake all that they possess; as Jesus Christ did to the Young Man in the Gospel, after he had said he had kept the Commandments of God.*

*The same I say to those to whom I present this Matter of True Vertue in these Twenty Four Letters, (which are but the beginning of my Designs) to let them see wherein it consists.*

*To those I mean who will embrace and follow it, and not to others; for this would be but to cast Pearls before Swine,*

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Swine, or the Childrens Bread to Dogs. These are yet earthly Souls, and have their Affections wedded to the Wealth, Honours, and Pleasures of this Life; and by consequence are not in a Disposition to put True Vertue in practice. It seems enough to them not to transgress grossly and outwardly the Commandments of God; for they know no other Evils but these which are forbidden by those Commandments.

But Souls, who have abandon'd the World to follow Jesus Christ, and to be renewed into his Spirit, ought to labour with all their Strength, to acquire this True Vertue, by renouncing the Corruption of their Nature: And they may be perswaded, they shall never attain to a Truly Christian Life, unless they overcome the Inclinations of this Corrupt Nature. We must labour diligently in the Mortification of our Senses, that we may get the Victory over that Corruption which Sin has brought into Humane Nature; without this, our Vertue is False, or Apparent only, and not at all that which is Vertue before God.

For if you shew me a Person Sober, Chaſt, and Upright in his Affairs; who imparts of his Goods to the Poor, who Fasts at the appointed Times, and does many other good Works, and nevertheless follows the Motions of Corrupt Nature; I make no reckoning of all these Vertues, if he have not join'd to them the Renunciation of his Corrupt Nature, and if he have not entirely renounced his own Will: For all these things together come not near the Victory, which is in overcoming the Motions of Corrupt Nature. And Saint Paul names to us yet greater Vertues than those which I have nam'd, when he says, Tho' I had the Gift of Prophecy; and Faith that could transport Mountains; and tho' I should give all my Goods to the Poor; if I have no Charity, I would be nothing.

Now Charity is no other thing but the Love of God; which cannot be obtain'd but by renouncing Self-love; and by bating the Corruption of our Nature: For we can never do Good, if we depart not from Evil; and all sorts of Evil are contain'd in the Corruption of our Nature, since it is fallen into Sin. So that we can never attain to True Vertue, but by renouncing this Corruption, no more than to the Charity,

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city, of which the Apostle speaks, without having overcome it. With him therefore I tell all those who would attain to True Vertue, that all other good Actions will avail nothing, until they have vanquished and overcome the Corruption that Sin has brought into Humane Nature; since all sort of Evils flows from it, and no Good can be found in it. Tho' the Blindness of Men makes them presume that they can do any Good, yet nevertheless all they do is Evil, so long as they act according to the Motions of Corrupt Nature; and it is only Arrogance and Presumption of Spirit, that they think themselves wise and willing to do all Good. For if Man were so, he would still distrust himself, and would never undertake any thing, for fear least he do it ill, since that is in him, and nothing can come out of a Vessel, but that which is within it.

When Man was first created by God in the State of Innocence, he was full of all Good, and all manner of Good proceeded from him; but since he fell into Sin, he has been filled with all Evil, and nothing can flow from him, but all sort of Evil. This is a general Rule, and by it ought every one to regulate his Life, if he would be saved: For there is no Exception for any Body; since all Men in general were corrupted by Adam's Sin, and by consequence are all full of Evil, without excepting so much as one.

It is indeed true, that Mens Natural Tempers are different as to Manners and Conditions: One is Mild, another is Passionate; one is Proud, another is Humble; but this comes from the Temperament of their Nature: Because Man being made up of the Four Elements, Water, Fire, Earth, and Air, his Natural Manners are disposed in proportion to the Element that prevails most in him; for every one has different Qualities in their Nature. He, who in the forming of his Body shall have contracted more of Fire than of the other Elements, will be more Cholerick, and more Luxurious, because Heat prevails more in him, than the Air, Water, or Earth. Another, who in his Formation hath contracted more of Water, will be more dull in his Manners, more slow to Comprehend any thing, and less Courageous. He, who in his Formation has received more of Earth, than of the

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the other Elements, will be still more heavy, lax, and rude in his Manners. And in fine, He, who in his Formation has contracted more of Air, than of another Element, will be more light and unconstant in his Manners, more dextrous and prompt to do Good or Evil: And by these Temperaments of Nature, all Men are of different Complexions, and different Manners; according as they have contracted from their Parents the disorder of the Elements, of which their Bodies were formed.

But in respect of Grace, they are all of a like Nature; and by Sin are fallen into the same Corruption, one as well as another: And therefore all have equally need of opposing this common Corruption, since they are all equally corrupted by Sin; they must overcome it, if they would be saved, without fancying that one is better than another, because he has some better Temperament in his Nature. For this Nature does nothing to Grace, and sometimes he who has more of Fire, will be more Verruons than he who has more of Water; for if he make use of that Natural Heat to love God, he will love him so much the more; and if he employ his Choler in defending Justice and Vertue, he will do it much better than a Phlegmatick Person, who usually loves nothing but his Ease.

Even so they, who in the Disorder of their Nature have contracted more of Air, than of the other Elements; will be always more subtle for discovering of Evil, and more prompt to do Good, when they shall apply themselves to seek after Solid Vertue: So shall he also, who has in him more of Earth, than of other Elements, for he will be more grave and staid; and if he give himself to the Service of God, he will be more constant and persevering in it, than the Three others will be. And thus every one may be agreeable to God in the State and Condition in which he has been produc'd, provided he apply the Talent that he has receiv'd, for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of his own Soul. Therefore David says, Let every Spirit praise the Lord. Not that he thereby means, that the Devils, and the Wicked praise the Lord, since these do blaspheme him: But his meaning is, that all Spirits, who would become true Christians, should praise the Lord; tho' they be all of different Natural Complexions; for

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God has no respect of Persons, and does not regard whether they have more of Fire, Water, Earth, or Air in their Nature; but with what Affection every one will love and serve him.

This I regard also, in writing of Solid Vertue: But I do not aim to make it weighty and difficult; I desire only to make it known to those who would practise it; and that because I love them: Thus I cannot leave them in Ignorance, nor permit that they perish amidst their Good-will, for want of the Knowledge wherein True Vertue does consist.

This has engag'd me to deduce this matter at length; for fear least those Souls, which are so dear to me, perish through Ignorance; as many have done already, who thought they had acquired True Vertue, when they had nothing but Seeming Vertues, or fine Speculations about Vertue; and they knew not that it consists in overcoming of Corrupt Nature, in True Humility, and in Voluntary Poverty. Tho' Jesus Christ has taught it so much both by Word and Deed, Men do not follow it in their Practice, for want of good Explication, and of the Light of Truth. This God having given me, I do willingly impart it to others, by publishing this First Part of True Vertue. And how soon I have leisure, I shall publish more of it, for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, which aspire to Perfection. What I offer them at present, I do it with all my Heart, as a Present come from Heaven, which will shew them the Light of Truth, and let them see the Deceits of False Vertue, as also the Means to attain to that which is True and Solid.

This First Part discovers, among other things, how the Devil endeavours always to divert Souls from True Vertue, by so many different Wiles and Tricks. In fine, this is a School, wherein we may learn, To deny our selves, to take up our Cross, and to follow Jesus Christ; as he taught all those who would become his Disciples, in the perfect Sense, and the true Explication. Receive it then with as good a Heart, as I present it to you with a Christian Charity: And I remain,

Friendly Reader,

Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.



A  
CONFESSIO  
N  
O F  
*Faith and of Religion*

Made publickly by *Antonia Bourignon*, because  
of the Doubts that some had as to her Belief  
and Religion.

I.

I Am a Christian, and I believe all that a True Chri-  
stian ought to believe.

II.

I am baptised in the Catholick Church, in the Name  
of the Father, in the Name of the Son, in the Name  
of the Holy Ghost.

III.

I believe the Twelve Articles of the Creed, or the  
Apostles Symbol, and I do not doubt of one Article  
of it.

IV.

I believe that Jesus Christ is True God, and that he  
is also True Man; as also that he is the Saviour and  
Redeemer of the World.

V.

I believe in the Gospel, in the Holy Prophets, and  
in all the Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and New  
Testament.

*I will live and die in all the Points of this Faith, which  
I protest before God, and Men, to all whom it may concern.*

*In Testimony whereof, I have sign'd this my Confession  
with my own Hand, and seal'd it with my Seal.*

*At Sleeswick, this 11th.  
of March, 1675.*

*And Sign'd,*

*It was sealed with her Seal  
[L. S.]*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*



A  
CATALOGUE  
OF THE  
Printed Books,

Composed by the Late  
M. A. BOURIGNON,  
Born in the City of Lisle, in Flanders.

1. **T**HE Life of Mrs. A. Bourignon, Where is compris'd. 1. An *Apology* for her Person, and her Doctrine. 2. Her *Interiour Life*, compos'd by her self. 3. Her *Exteriour Life*, by her self. 4. Her *Life continued*, until her Death, by a Person of her Acquaintance. In Sixty Eight Sheets.

2. *The Call of God, and the Refusal of Men.* In Two Parts. The former is the *First* of her Works, in Form of Letters address'd to her Pastor and Confessor; where she exhorts him to True Conversion, and to consecrate himself wholly to God, to be filled with the *Graces* whereof God offers the Accomplishment in these last Times. She demonstrates here the manner of her own Conversion, of her Call, and of her Correspondence to the Designs of God. The *Second*, contains Admonitions to all sorts of Persons to retire out of the State of Corruption, for to follow the Voice of God, who knocketh still at their Hearts, with which they nevertheless will not Correspond through habitual Obduration. With a Treatise Of the *Solitary Life.* In Twenty Eight Sheets.

3. *Light*

### *A Catalogue of Books, &c.*

3. *Light arising in Darknefs.* In Four Parts. In Form of Letters. The *First* sheweth the Disposition that we ought to have for receiving the Light of the Holy Ghost, and contains an admirable Explication of the 24th. Chapter of Saint *Matthew*. The *Second*, after the Explication of the 25th. Chapter of *St. Matthew*, That of many Christian Vertues, and of the Motives to forsake the World, and give our selves to God. The *Third* and *Fourth*, are full of Sound Doctrines, and of Instructions Important and Necessary, as well in Theory as in Practice, &c. In Fifty Three Sheets.

4. *The Funeral of False Divinity exterminated by the True,* proceeding from the Holy Ghost. Containing Four Parts. Whereof the *First* sheweth the Confusion, the Ignorance, the Corruption, the Insensibility, and the Fundamental Errors of the Doctors, and likewise of the Modern Christians. The *Second*, their Presumption, Envy, Pride, Opinionativeness, and Pre-occupations. The *Third*, that their Theories and Practices are no more than Pharisaical, without Divine Faith: And the *Fourth*, that the Devil hath a great Power over Men, over the Wicked, and over the more Sober themselves, that he diverts through them from following of God, engages them to co-operate to the Evil of others, and causes them to return Backward when they had already forsaken the World. Sixty Sheets.

5. *Innocence acknowledged, and Truth discovered:* An Apologetical Treatise for the Conduct and the Affairs of *Monsieur de Cort*: Where is seen by Living Examples the strange Procedure of the Priests and Ecclesiasticks that are esteemed the Best, toward their own Superiours and Fellow-Brethren, who would retire out of the Corruption, and be consecrated to God. Seventeen Sheets.

6. *An Avertisement against the Sect of the Quakers:* An Apologetical Treatise opposed to a Libel of this Sect against her. She there ruines perfectly the Foundations and the particular Errors of this Sect, discovers and solidly establishes the Foundations of Authority, and of the Power of all sorts of Superiours in the Political, Ecclesiastical, and Oeconomical State; the Duties of Subjects; the Principles of good Manners, and good Laws; as well as the Principles, the Means, and the Marks of the True Christian Religion, or of the State of a True Christian, and of a Regenerated Person. Twenty Six Sheets.

## *A Catalogue of Books,*

7. *A Treatise of Solid Vertue.* In Two Parts. In the *First* she lays the Foundations of the Apprenticeship of the Christian Life, of the Imitation of Jesus Christ, of True Vertue, and of the Combat that is to be undertaken against all the Insults of the Devil, of whom she discovers all the Artifices. The *Second* sheweth how we ought to acquire the most Perfect Vertue by a Passive Way, by Abstinence, Renunciation, Abnegation, and Abdicating of all the Things of the World, of all Longing, of Self-Conduct, and of Self-Will. *Twenty Sheets.*

8. *The Light of the World.* In Three Parts. Filled with surprizing and admirable Truths, whereof the Principal are: 1. That the Christian Church is Lapsed, and become Universally throughout the Grand Whore of the Revelation. 2. That God will exterminate her by the Scourges of Plague, War, and Famine. 3. That he will Recal and Convert the Jews. 4. That Christ shall come to Reign Gloriously upon the Earth. 5. And that to enter again into the Grace of God, and into the Renovation of his Church, there is no other way but by Re-entering into the Divine Dependance and Resignation. This Work is one of the most wonderful of her Writings. *Fifty Eight Sheets.*

9. *The Academy of Divines.* In Three Parts. Where is treated of Grace, of Predestination, of the Liberty of Man; where are equally refuted the Errors of the *Jansenists* and the *Molinists*, as well as the corrupted Morality of the *Casuits*. There is afterward treated of the Poor Estate of the Church, as also of that of the Pastors, of the Religious, or the Regulars, and of all Christians: Of the manner of knowing the State of Souls, and of Spirits, and particularly of the Notes of the True Spirit of Prophecy: Of the New Birth; of the Outward Life and Conduct, and of its Abuses; as also of those of the Outward Worship, and of Ceremonies; of the Danger of Damnation, wherein the most Pious are; of hidden and unknown Sins, and of the Return to the Dependance on God. *Thirty Three Sheets.*

10. *The Testimony of Truth.* In Two Parts. The *First* is, An Apologetical Treatise, opposed to Two Libels of certain Persons of the Reformed Religion; where, after having declared the Original of the Hatred which the Clergy did bear toward her unjustly, she makes it apparent, that she had no other Design but to lead Persons to Christ: That Christians have done Ill to divide themselves into Sects, even under the Pretext of a Reformation, which hath not been well  
executed,

*Composed by M. Antonia Bourignon.*

executed, both by reason of Retrenching many Good Things, as likewise, by Introducing many not so Good, as well in the Theory as in the Practice: She herein unveils some hidden Mysteries, touching the Glorious Creation of Man, the Production of the Woman, the Birth of Iesus Christ, the Necessity, the Facility, and the Amiability of God's Commandments. To which is adjoined a *Collection* of Depositions, part Publick and upon Oath, both of Divines, and of all sorts of Persons, who knew her from her Infancy, in Opposition to the Calumnies which her Enemies spread and published against her, with design to make odious in her Person the Divine Truths which she declares. *Sixty Sheets.* The *Second* is, An Apologetical Treatise against the Lutheran Clergy of *Holstein*, where it is shewn, how, being retired with some Friends into that Country to live Christianly upon her Estate, in the Solitary Island of *Noorestrand*, she could not obtain to dwell there in peace, notwithstanding her Rights, Remonstrances, and Explications of her Doctrine, both to the Court, and to the chief of the Clergy, and to several others; these Lutheran Priests having forced her by their continual Persecutions, by Pillage and Ravage of her Goods which they procur'd, and by continual Perils of her Life, to forsake the Country. *Thirty Eight Sheets.*

11. *The Touchstone.* An Apologetical Treatise, opposed to the Libel of a Lutheran Calumniator, who, to cause her to be persecuted and destroyed, maliciously imputed to her the Heresies of Socinianism. She sheweth herein how far her Persecutors are remote from being Christians, being destitute of True Charity, both in their Doctrines, and in their Behaviours: She makes here to appear the Excess of their Injustices, and of their Rage against her; refutes and confounds the Heresies imputed to her; explains the Satisfaction and Merits of Christ, the Profitableness to Salvation of this Doctrine, the Aim of the Gospel, the Designs of God thereby, the Miserable State of Men at present before God, the manner of escaping it, and of arriving to Life Everlasting. *27 Sheets.*

12. *The Blindness of Men now adays.* In Two Parts. The *First* is, An Apologetical Treatise, opposed to the Slanders of some Mennonists, or Anabaptists, wherein, with the Refutation of their Errors and of their Slanders, is seen the Character of Corrupt Nature, with regard to External Conduct, and the Pretexts wherewith it would cover it self; and how we ought to comport our selves with them, who making a Semblance of seeking the Kingdom of God, seek not but  
their

## *A Catalogue of Books*

their own Accommodation. In the *Second*, she Answers to several Matters that Men found to object against her Conduct, and her Doctrine, through the Blindness and Presumption of their Spirit. *Forty Four Sheets.*

13. *Antichrist Discovered.* In Three Parts. Whereof the *First* sheweth, what is Antichrist, and that he Reigns and Lords it Universally, even by the means of all the Holy Things; and not only over the most Wicked Persons, who would appear as Saints, while yet they are in Compact with him, but likewise the better sort: The *Second*, how he Reigns and Lords it over all by false Subtilties, Disputes, Glosses, that straying Reason makes upon Divine Matters, under which he hides and flatters the Evil: The *Third*, how he Reigns and Lords it in all Sects, what differences of Opinion soever they have, as well as in every State, and every Condition. *Thirty Sheets.*

14. *The New Heaven, and the New Earth:* Where it is declared in what State of Glory Man and all the Creatures were created: How, and into what Misery they are fallen thence: How they continue and even advance in this Infelicity, and by what means they ought to enter into the Disposition, that God requires from them, for the Re-establishment in their First Glory, and the Renewing the whole World.

15. *The Holy Perspective:* Whereby she makes it appear, That Men, and even Christians, and in particular the Cartesian Philosophers, have lost the Light of God, which is Divine Faith; to let themselves be conducted by Corrupt Reason, and by a false and very faint Glimmering which is drawn from Nature through Sin become all perverted, beastal and carnal. That it is this which has corrupted all Christian Religion; and that God may establish it again, we must forsake this false Conductress of Reason, and be resign'd to God, who will cause to revive through himself in us the Divine Faith, which we have there extinguished. *Ten Sheets.*

16. *The Last Mercy of God.* Where, by a Reason illuminated by Faith, and purified from Corruption, she leads every Person of Spirit to the Conviction of the things which Faith discovers; and to which Reason, than when it is conducted by a Person enlightned in the Faith, renders convincing Testimonies, which incite us to search for the Saving Knowledge of these very things by Faith; such as are, the Existence of God, his Attributes, the Immortality of the Soul, and the Eternal Duration of all his Works.

*Composed by M. Antonia Bourignon.*

17. *The Renovation of the Evangelical Spirit.* In Three Parts. Where are discovered the Fundamental Truths of the True Christian Religion, as are, the All of God, the Nothing of Man, the Glory and End of his Creation, the Miseries into which he is fallen, the infinite Mercy of God, the Intercession and Merits of Jesus Christ, the incredible Greatness and Universality of the Corruption of our Nature, the Necessity and the Manner of renouncing it to embrace an Evangelical and Christian Life; to subsist before God during the Plagues wherewith he will load the Wicked World, and afterwards Renew the Earth, and there come to Reign Eternally with his Saints after the Extirpation of the Wicked. *Forty Seven Sheets.*

18. *The Stones of the New Jerusalem:* Where is seen what are the Dispositions, Qualities, and Conduct, that one must have to become a True Christian, and fit to enter into the Edifice of the New Jerusalem, which God will Re-establish on the Earth before the End of the World; and what are the Indispositions that render Men incapable of being admitted into it: With the Explications of the Words and Parables of Jesus Christ, whereby these Truths are demonstrated. *Twenty Four Sheets.*

19. *The Persecutions of the Righteous.* Letters written on Occasion of all sorts of Persecutions that have followed her at all Times, and in all Places, even to her Death. *Twenty Sheets.*

20. *The Morning Star:* Where she discovers very many Rare, Divine, and Unknown Lights, touching the Glorious State of the Creation; the Fall, the Restitution, and the Means of Salvation. With a Collection of her Fragments. *Twenty Sheets.*

21. *The Confusion of the Babel-Workers:* Where is seen how such as ought to build Jerusalem, are the most opposite to Divine Truths, because they strive to build every one their own Babel of Confusion, where they neither will nor can understand the Language of God. *Eight Sheets.*

22. *Sound Advices* to all sorts of Persons, and upon all sorts of Matters; Divine, Moral, of Theory, of Practice, and of Conscience. In Two Parts. *Thirty Five Sheets.*

These are all the Works of M. BOURIGNON; the greatest part of which are translated from the Original French into German, and into Dutch. *Solid Vertue*, Part I. *The Touchstone*, and the *Renovation of the Evangelical Spirit*, the



*A Catalogue of Books, &c.*

First Part, are also in Latin. The *Light of the World*, and *Solid Vertue*, in English.

There is Adjoined to these Books, a *Divine Treatise* of John Engelbert, concerning the *Ecclesiastical, Political, and Oeconomical State*, both because of its Agreeableness with the same Truths, as also because it is founded on the same Principles.

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A N  
I N D E X  
O F T H E  
C O N T E N T S of the First Part.

Letter I. **W**E must learn of Jesus Christ, Meekness, Gentleness and Humility of Heart.

*Written to one desirous of True Vertue (also all the following are addressed to the same) shewing, that to attain thereto, we must have Submission and Obedience, by which we may begin to learn Meekness, Gentleness, and Humility of Heart. Page 1.*

II. We must learn of Jesus Christ, Meekness, Gentleness, and Humility of Heart.

*Shewing, wherein Meekness and Lowliness consists, which are Fruits of the Holy Spirit; and cannot be obtained, unless we renounce our own Will, submitting to the Will of God. p. 8.*

III. Men can sufficiently know the Will of God, if they would perform it.

*Shewing, (him that perswaded himself that the Will of God is not manifest in every thing that we might accomplish it, denying our own) that it may be known, and is sufficiently manifested in the Commands of God, which Jesus Christ proposes so clearly, saying, Learn of me, for I am Meek, and Lowly, and Humble of Heart. p. 14.*

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### IV. Humility is acquired by the Knowledge of our Selves.

*Shewing, wha Humility of Heart is, what are the Marks of it, and how we should endeavour to attain it, by the Knowledge of the Infirmities and Miseries of our Souls and Bodies, and Blindness of our Minds.* p. 20.

### V. Humility is acquired by knowing ones Self.

*Shewing, that the true Knowledge even of things most esteemed by Men, ought to serve to humble them; such as the Honours, Riches, and Pleasures of this Life: That all these are vain, disquieting, unsatisfying, and hurtful.* p. 25.

### VI. Humility is acquired by knowing ones Self.

*Admonishing to learn Humility by knowing the Truth of our Corruption and Sin, which is the Disorder of our Five Natural Senses.* p. 31.

### VII. He that serves the Lust of his Senses, thereby actually renounces the Love of God.

*Exhorting to the Effects of Humility, the Renouncing of our Senses; shewing, that none can follow them, but he thereby renounces the Love of God, which is the End of our Creation, and the Essence of True Vertue.* p. 36.

### VIII. It is easier to love God than any thing else.

*Shewing, that we must renounce the Abuse of our Senses, and that the right use of them should be referred to God: That it is possible, reasonable, and necessary to love God with all our Heart.* p. 43.

### IX. It is easier to love God than any thing beside him.

*Shewing, that it is most easie, sweet, profitable, and honourable to love God, and keep his Command, for him that will deny himself; but that it is Blasphemy to say, That it is impossible to love God with all our Heart.* p. 50.

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*Shewing, that the Love of God is in it self most easie to be acquired; whence the Difficulties proceed which we find in it, and how they should be removed: That this Love admirably lightens the Inconveniences of this Life, and renders the Keeping of the Commands of God, and the Counsels of the Gospel, easie and pleasant.* p. 56.

### XI. We

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XI. We must always proceed in Vertue, whatever Impediments occur.

*Giving Encouragement in the Way of Vertue., although the Beginning be Difficult, because of the Tentations by which the Devil vexes them that have resolved to embrace True Vertue.*

p. 64.

XII. The Devil, the Enemy of True Vertue, opposes it by all manner of Devices.

*That it is necessary to know the Wiles of the Devil, with which he opposes true Vertue, that we may evite them, which are recited in this and the following Letters; as, 1. That the Devil mixes himself in what is sensual in Man. 2. That he accommodates himself to the Inclinations and Impulses of every one, leaving all the rest in quiet.*

p. 71.

XIII. Whatever is sensible to Nature, is not the Work of Grace or Vertue.

*Discovering a Third Artifice of the Devil, whereby he perswades Men, that they may satisfie their Senses in a State of Regeneration, and Praising God; a Fourth, by which he affixes the Heart to Spiritual Pleasures and Delights, wherewith the Followers of Vertue are affected.*

p. 78.

XIV. The Devil transforms himself into an Angel of Light.

*Discovering a Fifth and Sixth Artifice of the Devil, by which he causes Men to apply themselves to the study of the Truth, and Mystical, and Spiritual Things. (5.) That they may comprehend and understand them. Or, (6.) That they may unseasonably instruct others.*

p. 85.

XV. The Devil incites to Good, that he may bring Evil out of it.

*A Seventh Deceit of the Devil is, to carry us out of our Selves, to compare our Good Works with others, that we may draw Vain-glory from our Vertue. An Eighth, whereby he excites us to immoderate Mortifications and Macerations of our Body. And a Ninth, whereby he excites us to immoderate Spiritual Good Works toward our Neighbours; as to desire to instruct, convert, reprove, or correct him unseasonably.*

p. 92.

XVI. The Devil mixes himself in our Good Works.

*A Tenth Artifice of the Devil, in our Corporal Good Works; which the Devil often turns to his own Honour. Yet we must not therefore cease from them, but join Moderation, and avoid Humane*

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*Humane Respect, and Considerations, and Pride, which insult over us in this Time of Trial.* p. 99.

XVII. Sin proceeds from Man's Free-Will.

*An Eleventh Tentation is proposed, by which we impute the Guilt of our Sins to the Devil, to excuse our selves: It is shewed, that the Devil cannot bring Man to sin, nor do him any hurt, without his own Free Consent.* p. 106.

XVIII. The Good and Evil Spirit are known by their Fruit.

*Proposing the Signs, to know whether we are ruled by the Good Spirit, or the Evil. A Twelfth Artifice of the Devil, by which he causes, us to impute our Vices to our Natural Inclinations, without suspecting him to work therein, that he may remain undiscovered.* p. 113.

XIX. We cannot in this Life be free from Tentations.

*Shewing, (to him that was afflicted, that the Devil hath Power to tempt us so variously) that a Thirteenth Artifice of the Devil is, to break the firmness and Strength of our Mind by Grief. Also, that Tentations are necessary and profitable to try and purifie us.* p. 120.

XX. Spiritual Diligence is Necessary to Salvation.

*A Fourteenth Impediment of the Devil, more pernicious than the rest, is, Spiritual Negligence. Moving also unto Spiritual Diligence, by Consideration of the Care usually bestowed in Worldly things, which the Children of this World manage with more Prudence and Care, than the Children of Light do their Business.* p. 127.

XXI. Spiritual Diligence Necessary beyond all other Vertues.

*Shewing, how Necessary Spiritual Diligence is for confirming the Mind in Vertue, and to remove Two more Impediments of the Devil; viz. 15. Sins of Omission, with which the Devil tempts Good Men: And, 16. Self-love, which insinuates it self in all, and is a continual Sin.* p. 135.

XXII. Spiritual Diligence Necessary to Salvation.

*Exhorting unto Spiritual Diligence, because without it none can persevere in the Service of God; nor overcome Corrupt Nature and Self-love.* p. 141.

XXIII. Spiritual Diligence Necessary to Salvation.

*Shewing the necessity of Spiritual Diligence, to watch over all the Actions of our corrupt Nature and proper Will, and to acquire*

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*acquire the Knowledge of our selves: That Spiritual Negligence is a Fountain of all Evils, and is alone sufficient to damn us, since it renders our Souls rude, and like uncultivated and cursed Ground, which brings forth nothing but Briars and Thistles; and so is far from Meekness, Lowliness, and Humility of Heart.*  
p. 147.

XXIV. Men are Idolaters of their own Corruption, and Enemies of True Vertue.

*Shewing, that the Continuing of this Subject is hindered by the Devil's exciting the Wise of this World, who are Enemies of Vertue, and Friends of Corrupt Nature, to distract the Mind of the Writer, by their Disputes, Lies, Calumnies, and all manner of Persecutions.*  
p. 153.

## ERRATA.

**P**Art I. page 17. line 44. for *otherwise*, read *otherwise*. p. 23. l. 5. for *again*, r. *against*. p. 49. l. 21. for *Gappiness*, r. *Happiness*. p. 49. l. 28. for *Gappiness*, r. *Happiness*. p. 58. l. 40. for *Nauve*, r. *Nature*. p. 62. l. 14. for *which was*, r. *which they were*. p. 93. l. 16. for *be honoured*, r. *be honoured*. p. 118. l. 43. for *endeavour*, r. *endeavours*. p. 151. l. 20. for *net*, r. *not*.

## The First LETTER.

That all Christians ought to learn of  
Jesus Christ, Meekness, Gentleness, and  
Humility of Heart.

*Written to one desirous of true Vertue: Shewing that to  
attain thereto, we must have Submission, and Obedience;  
by which we may begin to learn Meekness, Gentleness;  
and Humility of Heart:*

*My Dear Child,*

**I** Perceive you have not as yet comprehended what  
Jesus Christ teaches, when he says, *Learn of me, for  
I am meek, gentle, and humble in heart.* For when  
occasion offers, you do not practice it aright, but you  
give loose Reins to your Nature: For when it is inclin'd to  
Anger, you speak roughly; and sometimes you use Force  
and Violence to accomplish what you have resolv'd upon,  
and that as well in little things, as in great. This does not  
speak out Humility of Heart, since the humble in heart  
yields willingly to another in things that are not evil, and  
does not think that another should follow his will. But  
he is ever well content to follow the will of another, in all  
that is not against God, nor against the Perfection of his  
own Soul.

I think you may have observed this in me, for ordinarily  
I inform my self what is the will of my Brethren, that I  
may see what they love most in indifferent things: And I  
take more content to do any thing according to their desires,  
than according to my own, for this gives me more inward  
Peace and Quiet, and I feel a certain Satisfaction to see  
them contented and chearful. And even my Natural Tem-  
per is inclin'd to this, by a Habit that I have got of break-  
ing my own Will in every thing: And being overcome, it

2 *That all Christians ought to learn of* Part I.

Rules over all things, and is not troubled at any thing that falls out contrary to it, when it is not against God's Honour, nor the love of our Neighbour. All the rest is indifferent to me; whether it rains, or is fair weather; whether I eat sharp or sweet Meats, provided they do not prejudice the Health: Whether I be alone, or in Company, provided the one be as safe as the other: And in short, I am as well pleas'd to be in one Country, as in another, provided I find there the same occasions of living well. And thus I am comforted in all sorts of rencounters; whether I be sick, or in health; I have no choice, provided I honour God in the one as well as in the other: All is indifferent to me, and I would never make choice of any thing. So that I take from God's hand all that befalls me, and thus I am always content and joyful.

If you could learn this Method, you would be very happy, and always in quiet; whereas at present by fretting and discontents you disquiet and trouble your Spirit, and are uneasie to others, and so hinder mutual Love; for an angry word is not agreeable to any body, and a mild one softens the heart even of a furious Man. I know indeed that your Heart is good, and that you hate no body; nevertheless, to judge according to the tone of your Voice, one would say, that you were troubled; and they who do not know your Heart, would think that you were in anger. You must know that such are not always disposed to bear with you; and so this may break your Peace, and lessen that Charity which Jesus Christ has so much recommended to Christians, saying, *By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples, if you love one another.* I believe indeed you love your Brethren at the bottom of your heart; but you speak to them sometimes, as if you hated them, and as if you would not hear them speak. If they spoke as you do, you would hardly suffer them; so you ought to consider that they have much to suffer, when you speak so harshly. They do very well for themselves, when they bear with you; but your Soul has no profit by it: For though all the World should bear with you, you would not for this be justified before God, nor would your Natural Temper change its evil Inclinations, but be strengthened in them; and thus you would be in danger of living and dying imperfect. Which you would bewail much before God, when it would be too late.

It were far better therefore, to endeavour at present to over-

Let. I. *J. Christ, Meekness, Gentleness, &c.* 3

overcome this Passionate Humour, which is in your Nature, than to continue a Slave to the Passion of Anger, which Masters you, whereas you ought to govern it; and to use it only when you are to maintain the Truth, and to defend the Glory of God. Then we may give place to Wrath, and the Scripture says it also; *Be ye angry, and sin not.* But we ought never to give way to it in things indifferent, or of small importance, and far less speak roughly; for Jesus Christ says, *That we must be meek, gentle, and humble in heart.* This is a Lesson he gives to all Christians, and exhorts them to learn it of him, rather than the other Wonders that he wrought while he was on Earth. He does not bid them learn of him to raise the Dead, to heal the Sick, or to work other Miracles; but he bids expressly, *Learn of him, to be meek, gentle, and lowly in heart.*

I Counsel you therefore, my Child, to labour to acquire this Meekness, since it is good, salutary, and taught by Christ himself, who practised it, and tells us, we must learn it of him. I know you will feel some repugnance to this; and that you must do violence to your Nature, since it is still more inclin'd to fierceness than meekness. But the Kingdom of Heaven must be taken by force, since it is written, *That the violent take it by force.* Eternal Life does very well deserve a little Suffering, as also the Violence we must do to our selves, to overcome our evil Habits. Besides these Troubles are of short continuance, and the Eternal Joy shall never end. These thoughts should make us reckon all the Troubles that we can suffer in resisting our selves, to be but light. Resolve then to overcome this Passion of Anger. It is this that torments you most, and gives the Devil most Advantage against your Soul.

Watch therefore over your self, that you may resist it when occasions offer; for the first motions of Anger are not in your power, because of the evil habit which your Parents did not correct in your Youth; and so it is as it were naturalized in you, and stirs almost on every occasion. It is meet therefore that you make use of continual Prayer, whereby to oppose these continual motions. The sin does not consist in feeling them, but in consenting to them; and therefore, when you feel the motions of Anger, do not give place to them; but retire into your self, and beg of God the strength to resist them. While you are in this state, utter no words, because they cannot be meek, as Jesus Christ teaches they ought to be; and when they reply to you what



#### 4 *That all Christians ought to learn of* Part I.

you do not willingly hear, retire rather than answer them : And thus you shall overcome by little and little that Inclination, and become meek and gentle. As to Humility of Heart, it consists in subjecting our selves willingly to the will of another in all things that are good, or indifferent ; and believe assuredly, that so long as you have a repugnance to yield to the will of another, it is a sign you have not an humble heart, since it would have another to yield to it, and will not yield to him. An humble Heart is always distrustful of its self, and desires rather to Obey than to Command ; it still submits its Opinion to that of others, and will not contend to maintain its own, esteeming it the least of any, and therefore yields willingly to every one in matters good or indifferent.

If you had, my Child, this Humility of Heart which Jesus Christ requires, you would be happy and contented ; for nothing would ever fall out against your will, which being subjected to God, would always take all things from his hand, even tho' they came from the Wicked, or from the Devil himself, who could not hurt you, while you refer'd all to God. And the Devil will not long torment an humble heart, for Humility is displeasing to him. He flees from the humble, because he can gain nothing upon them ; and he seeks out the Proud, because they are likest to himself, as Birds of a Feather do willingly flock together. Therefore if you would be delivered from the Devil, be lowly in heart ; for as soon as you shall have acquir'd this Vertue, he will flee from you insensibly, and at last will not fight against you any longer. But there must be a true Humility of Heart, which consists not in actions outwardly humble, but in the inward motions of your heart, which ought not from the bottom to desire any longer to be honoured or esteemed, and far less to be followed and obeyed. But an humble heart does honour and esteem others, and willingly obeys them ; since there ~~there~~ is nothing that gives more Repose to a Man than Obedience : For he who has no other business but to obey, needs not cast about in his Mind, to know what he shall do, or what he shall say ; he ought only to hear what shall be told him, and follow that ; living thus as a Child, without any care, except that only of pleasing God ; which must needs give great quiet, both inwardly and outwardly.

I do not think that any body (even according to the Sentiments of Nature) can desire to Command, unless he have

a proud and arrogant Heart, and would wish to Rule over others. For Submission and Obedience is pleasant and agreeable; and we find by Experience, that he who has done his own will, has often regret and displeasure for it afterwards, and is discontented that he has done it. The Reason is, our Self-will is corrupted by sin, and so it breeds all sort of noxious Corruption, to him that follows it. How many have undone themselves, or made themselves miserable for all their Life, by following their own wills? One is engag'd in some Marriage, that is not very agreeable to him; others have followed the War, accepted of some Office, or undertaken some Business, which had impoverish'd and made them miserable, and even kill'd them with Grief or Melancholy. All comes from this, that they would needs follow their own will, and would not take Counsel, or obey any body. And such are obliged to endure and suffer the Adversities which their own wills have brought upon them. But he who can find a Person wholly disinterest'd, and will obey him according to God, is most happy and contented; since the Proverb says, *That he who plays the Fool by Counsel, does it well.* The meaning is not, that any Folly is good, but that he who submits to the will of God, and the Counsels of the Gospel, does always well; tho' Men look on it as a folly, as many do now adays, when any would follow these Counsels exprelly according to the Letter. Thus it is a folly to Humane Sense to despise the Goods, the Wealth, and Pleasures of this Life, to become mean and humble with Jesus Christ. But he who plays the Fool at that rate, *Fools well.*

Not, my Child, that I would Counsel you to be subject and obedient in things of Importance, to Men who do live yet according to their own will (as well as you) for this would be often evil; the corrupt will of another being as bad as your own. Nevertheless, it will be profitable for your own Perfection, to obey them in things indifferent, or of small consequence, when they wrong no body. And thereby you shall overcome your own Corruption, and accustom your self to submit willingly to that which will be well-pleasing to God. For Custom turns into Nature, and he who accustoms himself to submit to Men for his own Perfection, it will be easie and pleasant to him to submit also for the same to God, since he will do it without any repugnance in his Nature, which being habituated to Obedience in all indifferent things, will take pleasure to obey

6 *That all Christians ought to learn of* Part I.

in good things; and consequently your Heart will still find Repose and Contentment.

But so long as you will not exercise this Obedience and Submission of your Spirit, you shall have Troubles and Combats within your self, and shall not be loved by others, nor united to them in the same will, as God commanded us, saying, *Be ye united together in one will.* This nevertheless we do not observe; for as many divers Persons as there are of us, we have as many different wills; which discovers in all a Pride of Heart, that is far from observing the Counsels which Jesus Christ gives us; that is, *To learn of him, who is meek, gentle, and humble in heart.* We ought to retain this Lesson, and to put it in practice on all occasions. The subject of it is at hand; for being a company of Persons who aim at Perfection, we shall have no reason to fear lest we do evil in obeying one another; as it often falls out in the World, where one can hardly submit to another, without offending God, since all are full of sins, and their wills are evil, which we ought rather to resist, than obey: For many good Men have undone themselves, because they would please the Wicked; and by this means have been partakers of their sins.

We are by God's Grace out of this hazard, since all of our Company are Persons of Good will, and labour for the Perfection of their Souls. So you cannot do evil in yielding to them in indifferent things, and especially in things that are good. Try always whether what they propose or desire be good; and when you do not find it to be certainly so, then stop to examine if it is evil, or if it may hurt or bring prejudice to any one. And if you judge it to be so, you must excuse your self from yielding with all the mildness you can; and so you shall offend no body, tho' you do not follow their will. But if you resist them with rough and sharp words, as desirous to Correct or Reprove them, you had better hold your peace, than speak.

But I will not believe, that such cases shall fall out in our Company, for I imagine that no body will give himself to all things, but yet they will give one another occasion of exercising Patience, since all being imperfect, all will have some defect that Christian Charity must bear with; and this must perfect you together: For if there were nothing to be born with in your Brother, you could never know how far you have advanc'd in Vertue, since the Heart of Man is deceitful, and still flatters it self; for it does not  
know

Let. I. *J. Christ, Meekness, Gentleness, &c.* 7

know it self, but upon the Rencounters and Occasions, where it meets with its self again. Then it finds to what degree of Meekness and lowliness of Heart it is advanced; which otherwise could not be known. And consequently you should love the occasions of Sufferings, that you may exercise your self in Christian Perfection. Therefore let not the present Occasion escape, for the past is not in your Power, and what is to come is uncertain. It is only the present moment, that furnishes us with means of our Perfection. In like manner be not curious to spy the faults of others; for every one must Labour for his own Perfection, and is not to yield an Account of his Brother. Live so, as if you had nothing else to do, but to perfect your own Soul, and to fulfil the will of God; for nothing concerns you but this. For if all the Men of the World were Holy, and you were not, their Vertues would be of no Advantage to you; and if you were vertuous, and all others were vicious, this would take nothing from your Vertue; for God will not demand of us an Account of others, but he will judge every one according to his Works.

Thus, when you shall have overcome your self, you shall have overcome all the World; and nothing can be any longer a hindrance to you in your Perfection; for the faults of others will even serve you as means to exercise your Patience, and to become meek, mild, and lowly in Heart; as Jesus Christ has counselled you to be. And the Vertues of others will stir you up to a greater Vertue. So that you will prevail over every one; for he who has overcome his Passions, is King over all the Earth, and has subjected all things to himself, he not being moved with any thing that falls out. Lo, this is a happy state, and yet easie to be attain'd to, provided we would embrace the means to it. We may overcome one Passion at a time, and so at last come to an end of them all. I Counsel you to begin with Obedience, for hereby you may overcome many of your Passions at once: For I will often bid you do things, to which your Nature will have repugnance; and if you do them without Reply, you shall overcome your Corruption, tho' it were but in very small matters; for it is the fault of that Corruption, not to yield willingly to another, and would still have Right and Reason in all that it conceives; which proceeds from the Pride of our Heart, that would always have others yield to us, and desires not to yield to any body; we still think that we are more wise and clear-

8 *That all Christians ought to learn of* Part I.

fighited than another. You must check this then in your Heart, and oblige it to submit to every one in things that are good and indifferent.

For my part, I have done thus, and have found in it great Advantages for the perfection of my Soul. I still submitted to all with whom I conversed; and I endeavour'd from the beginning to discover what were their Inclinations, that I might conform my self to them, and I did it so absolutely, that sometimes I did not discern the Evil of them, that I might oppose it. But since God has given me more Light, I do not obey Men but in things that are good, or in those that are indifferent. And I exhort you, my dear Child, to do the same; that by little and little you may become well pleasing to your Heavenly Father. Which is the earnest desire of her, who loves your Soul, to render it to God, to whom it belongs.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, 12 January, 1672.  
St. Vet.*

*Anthionette Bourignon.*

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L E T T E R II.

To the same Person, on the same Subject.

*Shewing wherein meekness and lowliness consists, which are fruits of the Holy Spirit, and cannot be obtained, unless we renounce our own will, submitting to the will of God.*

*( My Dear Child,*

I Perceive that you do not yet comprehend the words of Jesus Christ, where he says, *That we must learn of him to be meek, gentle, and humble in heart.* Therefore you must know what this Meekness is, otherwise you cannot love it; for we cannot perfectly love that which we do not know, and the reason why true Vertue is so little loved, is, because it is not well known. Many imagine that it is a visible, or corporeal, and material thing; and this has bred Hypocrisie in mens Hearts, who are perswaded that they are virtuous, because

Let. II. *J. Christ, Meekness, Gentleness, &c.* 9

because they have done some outward Good Works, while in the mean time there is nothing of the Essence of Vertue in them. For true Vertue is a Spiritual thing, which must possess the Heart of Man; and it cannot be seen, nor felt, but by the Operations which it produces, springing from the bottom of the Heart; and if these good Operations do not proceed from that Fund, but are only studied things, or done to please Men, or to satisfy our selves, they are but Moral or Temporal Vertues, which add nothing to our Souls, and cannot be rewarded with Eternal Life.

But they may indeed serve as Means to attain to true Vertue, when our Intention is to tend to it, and to aspire after it. The mischief is, that many stop at these Means and outward Vertues, as if they were the End; and so they think they have Vertue indeed, while they have it only in shadow, and not at all in reality.

Therefore I will teach you what true Vertue is; and in particular *what that Meekness is*, which Jesus Christ says, *You must learn of him*. It is no other thing, but a peace, a repose, and tranquillity of Spirit, which resides in the bottom of our Soul. And all these Qualities are spiritual, which Men can neither see nor feel but by their outward operations. But the Essence of this Vertue of Meekness is a Divine Quality, and it cannot be judged by outward Actions whether one possesses it; for we may learn to speak meekly, and yet not have the Meekness which Jesus Christ says we must learn of him. We may learn meek Words as a Parot learns them; and we may even pronounce them out of Civility or Hypocrisy; for I have known Persons who appear'd very Meek in their Behaviour, and yet were inwardly Wicked and Arrogant. We must not therefore amuse our selves with this outward Meekness, which is oft-times deceitful or natural: For there are Persons so faint-hearted, that they fear to speak a harsh Word, least this might breed them Trouble, or cause them to meet with a rough Answer. And this softness makes them mild, both as to Good and Evil. Yet they dare believe that they have the Vertue of Meekness, tho' they have nothing but the Vice of Sloth and Injustice; which makes them yield to the Evil of another, instead of resisting it with Care and Vigour, but they will not take so much Trouble.

It is not then this false Meekness, to which I exhort you, my Child, for then you should not learn that which Jesus Christ teaches you. But I would fain have you to comprehend what true Meekness is, that you may love and follow it.



10 *That all Christians ought to learn of* Part I.

it. It is then an inward Peace, a Repose of Conscience, a Tranquility of Mind that resides in the bottom of the Soul. Behold what that Meekness contains that Jesus Christ tells us we must learn of him. This Meekness was his practice all the time of his Mortal Life; and by this we may observe if there be yet at present any Souls possess'd with his Spirit. That is, if they really have those Three Qualities in their Souls, for otherwise they cannot be possess'd by the Holy Spirit.

Observe well in me: If I have peace in my Soul, quiet of Conscience, and tranquility in my Spirit; and if there you discover these Qualities, be certainly perswaded that you may acquire them also, for God does not refuse his Graces to those who ask and desire them. And he will be loth to refuse that of Meekness, since Jesus Christ says, we must learn it of him; for he will not command us to learn that which is impossible. God is just; and therefore he has taught us nothing by Jesus Christ, but what he will readily give us. This Spirit of Meekness and Gentleness is the Holy Spirit, which Jesus Christ tells us will not be refus'd to any, making use of this Comparison by way of Question; *Which of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent?* And from thence he draws this Conclusion; *If ye therefore being evil know how to give good things to your Children: How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

All the Evil lies in this, that we do not desire; and this desire cannot be great in us, so long as we do not know him. Many say, that the Holy Spirit does not operate in Souls now adays, as he did in the time of Jesus Christ and his Apostles; because they do not see him in the Form or Figure of a Dove, as he appeared at the Baptism of Jesus Christ; or in Tongues of Fire, as upon the Apostles in the Day of Pentecost. Which is a very weak Argument; for the Holy Spirit is not limited to any time, since he is God Eternal, who gives his Gifts, and bears his Fruits in all Seasons, and will do it to all Eternity: Since he can never be barren nor idle, but operates continually in the Souls which are dispos'd for it; and if we see not at present that Dove, and these Tongues of Fire, or other outward Signs, it is because we have no longer any need of them, since the Gospel Law, and the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, is sufficiently confirmed; at least there is no Christian (as I think) who calls it in Question.

Besides,

Let. II. *J. Christ Meekness, Gentleness, &c.* 11

Besides, these outward Forms would do nothing to the Souls of those who receive the Holy Spirit ; they would only serve to convince the hardness of the Hearts of the Incredible. True Believers therefore have no need to see outward Figures to persuade them that the Holy Spirit does even yet dwell in the Soul of him who is dispos'd for it. They may indeed search themselves, if they know what the Holy Spirit is, what are his Gifts, what his Graces, and what his Fruits, of which one is the Meekness that Jesus Christ says we must learn of him ; and tho' it be declared in divers places of Scripture, yet it is one and the same thing. For Jesus Christ says ; *Learn of me, who am Meek and Lowly.*

And St. Paul places amongst the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit, *Goodness, Gentleness.* Which is the same thing express'd in different words ; and in its essence it is, the peace, repose, and tranquility of the Mind, residing in the Soul, that has these Three inward Qualities. These Signs are sure Evidences that the Holy Spirit dwells there ; for the natural Spirit cannot give either true peace, or true repose, or true tranquility of Mind ; as the Meekness and Lowliness, which Jesus Christ says *we must learn of him*, do afford.

I think, my Child, these reasons do make you comprehend sufficiently what that Meekness and Gentleness is, which Jesus Christ teaches us ; and you may have remarked, that I do possess it in my Soul, since you see me in inward Peace, in quiet of Conscience, and tranquility of Spirit, without any great change ; but yet you know not how you may come to find in your own Soul the *effects* of this Meekness and Gentleness taught by Jesus Christ. I know assuredly that you love them, in so far as you know them ; but you know not how to acquire them. This I will also teach, if you will hearken to me, and follow my Counsel : For it is very easie to obtain the Meekness that Jesus Christ teacheth us, if you will empty your Soul of what hinders it, and become absolutely a Disciple of Jesus Christ, and follow his Instructions. And if you do not feel in your Soul true inward Peace, quiet of Conscience, and tranquility of Mind, you may be persuaded that you have not as yet learn'd of Jesus Christ his Meekness and his Lowliness ; and therefore you must embrace the means to attain to it.

The first fundamental Mean is, absolutely to desire and will it ; which I believe, by the Grace of God, you do. Secondly, you must endeavour to remove all sort of hindrances, which retard this peace, repose, and tranquility of Mind. These

## 12 *That all Christian ought to learn of* Part. I.

These hindrances are in our corrupt Nature; for since Sin, Men are fallen into a continual Trouble, War, and Disquiet. And our Passions being disordered, do breed all these things; and they cannot be govern'd, ordered, and kept in Peace, unless we have resisted and overcome them, and have also wholly renounc'd our Natural Inclinations. Then it is that we find peace, repose, and tranquility of Mind, and not before.

This is the Reason why Jesus Christ says, *That we must deny our selves, if we would become his Disciples.* For it is only this denial of our Passions, that is the true Mean to find this peace, repose, and tranquility of Mind; for since Sin came, our Passions rob us of these things; for before Sin, they were well temper'd and regulated, bringing joy, peace, and tranquility to our Souls, whereas now we find the quite contrary. For if we will let our Passions rule, they will lead us to Intemperance, Vexation, and Disquiet of Spirit: So that it is impossible that one who lives according to his natural Senses can learn the Meekness and Humility which Jesus Christ teaches us. And therefore he adds here this *Evangeli- cal Doctrine; That a Man must deny himself.* For the one cannot be without the other: If we would be Meek and Humble, as Jesus Christ teaches, we must of necessity deny our selves; since our corrupt Nature has nothing but bitterness and fretting, which breeds a Man trouble in his Mind, disquiet in his Will, and contention with his Neighbour. For he who has not Meekness in himself, cannot have Peace with his Neighbour; and if he have, it is nothing but civil or counterfeited, which gives no inward peace, nor tranquility in his Spirit, as I am perswaded, my Child, you experience in your self; for tho' you have a repose of Conscience in having quitted the World, and the occasions of Sin; yet you have not that inward Peace, which would render your Spirit serene and peaceable. But we see you act yet with Disturbance, which proceeds from corrupt and disorderly Passions. So if you could overcome this, and calm these unprofitable Agitations, you would have a great advantage, and should easily obtain the Meekness which Jesus Christ teaches; as also Lowliness and Gentleness, since these two are united to one another. The Meekness of our Heart begets Gentleness towards our Neighbour: For he who has Tranquility and Peace within himself, will not give his Neighbour trouble, nor occasion of vexation in any thing; since the Meekness of the Good quenches the Anger of the Wicked. And tho' one who

Let. II. *J. Christ, Meekness, Gentleness, &c.* 13

who has learn'd the Meekness and Gentleness of Jesus Christ were in the midst of all sort of Troubles, yet he would preserve the Tranquility of his Mind; for he would not follow the Motions of his corrupt Nature; and by this Mean he preserves the peace, repose, and tranquility of Mind, in which he is, by the Meekness and Gentleness that he has learn'd from Jesus Christ.

If you, my Child, would also learn this Lesson, endeavour to deny your self, and not to follow your own Will in any thing: For it has been corrupted by Sin, and therefore is inclin'd always to do evil. Be jealous of all that proceeds from your own Will, and do not follow it in any thing. It is it that robs you of the Meekness and Gentleness that Jesus Christ teaches; and we have no greater Enemy in the World than our Self-will. If you could comprehend this Truth well, undoubtedly you would not follow it in any thing; and you would distrust even your Good-will and Intentions, and suspect them. But because you do not yet sufficiently know that your own Will is evil, you do not distrust it: Nevertheless it betrays you often, and which is more, it leads you to do evil when you would do good. The fund and inward Intention of your Heart is good, but your Self-will opposes your good desires, and you do often the quite contrary to what you have well resolved. If I were in your place, I would never follow my own Will in any thing, and I would look upon all my own Self-will, as evil; since no Good can ever proceed from a thing wholly corrupted, as our Will is become by Sin; so that no good thing can come from it. All that is Good, must come from God; and all that's Evil from the Devil, and from the corrupt Will of Man. That is as a Fire that kindles in our Nature, Luxury, Wrath, and all sorts of Intemperance: It is insatiable, never satisfied, ever coveting what it has not, restless in its desires, eager in its pursuits, always thirsty, never refreshed, never contented; in short, our Self-will breeds us more Mischief, then the Devil himself does; for he could not hurt Man any way, if his Self-will, did not consent to it. When therefore we shall have overcome our Self-will, we shall also have overcome the Devil; for he can never make us sin, but by moving our Self-will to obey him. For this cause I have said, that a Man can never have a greater Enemy than his own Will; and consequently every one in particular, and all Men in general, ought to war against their own Wills. Nevertheless, few look on it as their Enemy, and very many make

make it their Idol, and esteem themselves happy when they can follow it in all things, without considering that it brings Death to the Soul, and hinders the Will of God from being fulfilled in us. For he who follows his own Will, is not subject to God's; for these two Wills are always contrary: So that he who would accomplish the Will of God, must of necessity deny his own Will; and he who would learn Meekness and Gentleness from Jesus Christ, must deny every thing to his own Will. And thus he shall have in his Soul, peace, repose, and tranquility of Spirit: Which I pray God give you by this Mean of renouncing your own Will; which is the only Mean to render you happy in this World, and to all Eternity; as she wisheth you, who desires your Salvation.

*From Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle, 5. of February, 1672.  
St. Ver.*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

## L E T T E R III.

**Men can sufficiently know the Will of God, if they would perform it.**

*To the same Person, who would persuade himself that we cannot know the Will of God in all things; tho' we certainly know it by his Commandments and do not follow it.*

*My Dear Child,*

**I** Believe you have understood sufficiently by my former what the Meekness and Gentleness is that Jesus Christ says we must learn of him; how it is pleasant to obey; how the Self-will of Man is corrupted by Sin, and how we must now war against it and overcome it, if we would find peace in our Souls, quiet of Conscience, and tranquility of Spirit.

But you cannot comprehend how you may so know the Will of God in all things, that you may follow it, and forsake your own Will.

Believe me, this doubt or scruple proceeds from your corrupt Nature, which would fain free its self, or excuse its

self from being obliged to renounce this Self-will, which it loves; and would gladly follow it, if it could shun the obligation of resisting it; and thus it persuades it self that it does not know the Will of God in all things, that it might follow it. The Heart of Man is even so deceitful, that he persuades his own Understanding to believe that he knows not the Will of God; and consequently cannot fulfil it in all things. But this is a deceitful Invention of Satan, that he may amuse us by false reasons, and fine appearances of Truth, which indeed are nothing but Lies. For all Christians in general may know the Will of God, if they please to inform themselves: But they will needs be ignorant of it, (for the most part) because they have no mind to obey it, even tho' they knew it; and they certainly know it without any doubt; but the love they have for themselves, and the little love they have for God, makes them say, that they do not know his will; and sometimes they have the confidence to say (lying) that they would do it, if they knew it; which is false. But the Heart of Man does often deceive it self, so that it does not know its own deceit, and lets it self be persuaded that its Lyes are Truths. This is the reason why many live in quiet, thinking themselves secure amidst the perils of their Salvation.

Therefore we should earnestly desire to discover the Truth in a thing of so great Importance, upon which our Eternal Happiness depends; and never to lull our selves asleep upon a false Pillow of Suppositions, which are not true: For he who sins ignorantly, goes ignorantly to Hell; since all Christians are obliged to know the will of God, which is clearly enough manifested to them by his Commandments, and yet more particularly by the Doctrine of Jesus Christ. Now, there are very few Christians who do not know that God has commanded, *To love him with all their heart, and their Neighbour as themselves.* And yet there are fewer who observe these Commands, and in the mean time they say, *If I knew the will of God, I would follow it.* And thus they Lye to God and to themselves, tho' they are persuaded that they speak Truth. So great is the Darkness in which Men live now adays, as to their Salvation.

It may be truly said, that at present they are given up to the Spirit of Error, and of Lyes; and that the Scripture had good reason to say, *That all men are liars,* since they now lye to themselves, to the prejudice of their Eternal Salvation, and that sometimes without knowing it. For in this, they



that they say they would follow the will of God, if they knew it, they lye, the Good as well as the wicked; since in effect we see that neither the one nor the other do it as to the first Commandment; to wit, that of Loving God with all our heart, and our Neighbour as our selves. For to love God with all our heart, we ought not to love any other thing but him alone, otherwise our heart would be parted and divided, instead of being entire in the Love of one only God. So that if we love the Riches, the Pleasures, and the Honours of this Life, we do not love God with all our heart, tho' we know that this is his will: And when we envy our Neighbours Happinefs, and do not help him in his need, we do not love him as our selves; and we do often to him, what we would not have done to our selves. In which we do not follow the will of God, tho' we certainly know, that his will is, that we should love our Neighbour as our selves. And thus we do not practice the will of God that we know; but we seek, besides that which is so clearly revealed, a more particular will in things of little moment, and we neglect to fulfil his will in what concerns our Eternal Salvation.

It is therefore much to be fear'd, that we would not do the will of God, in little things, tho' we knew it, since we will not do it in things so great, and so profitable for our Eternal Happinefs. So that this would be to tempt God, to ask of him what his will is in all things, when we do not fulfil it in the chief things, as his expresse Commandments, and his saving Ordinances are.

I have heard Men sometimes say, that it is a sweet thing, and a great happinefs, for one to be able to discover expressly and in all things the will of God; looking on this as a particular Favour, and an extraordinary Happinefs. And yet, if this Grace were given them, it is to be feared it would turn to their greater Condemnation; *For he who knows his Father's will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* And the reason why God does not communicate himself to all Christians, is because they are not ready, nor dispos'd to do the will of God, when it is contrary to their own. Therefore every one ought to endeavour to fulfil the will of God, which he knows by his Commandments, rather than to go to ask of God particular things, so long as he does not fulfil the principal things, such are the Commands of God, or the Counsels of Jesus Christ. And these Counsels do yet more particularly explain the will of God, than his Com-  
mands

mands in general do. For Jesus Christ deduces in particular all that we ought to do and avoid; to fulfil the Command of loving God with all our heart, and our Neighbour as our selves, saying, *Learn of me, who am meek and gentle*; which teaches the Love of God, and of our Neighbour; for Meekness signifies the Love of the Goodness of God, and Gentleness signifies the Love of our Neighbour. Meekness is one of the Essential Qualities of God, which seems to surpass his other Qualities. It is like Oyl among other Liquors; which always swims above; for we see in all the Works of God, his Goodness and Meekness superabound more than his other Qualities. Tho' this Goodness is never separated from his Righteousness and Truth, yet nevertheless it is exalted above his Righteousness and his Truth.

For in many things we see that God has stopt his Wrath to give place to his Goodness, when Men did Repent, and were converted; as he did to the People of *Nineveh*, who by their sins had justly merited that God's Justice should be executed against them; yea, and the Truth of God had foretold, that within Forty days their City should be destroy'd. But as soon as that People turns to Repentance, the Goodness of God gets uppermost, and swims above his Justice, and his Truth, and he pardons them of his great Meekness and Goodness. So that we may with truth say, that the Goodness of God surpasses his other Qualities. And since Jesus Christ exhorts us *to be perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect*, we ought to labour particularly to acquire this Vertue of Meekness and Gentleness, which Jesus Christ tells us, *we must learn of him*, that we may tend to this Perfection of our Heavenly Father. And when we shall have in the bottom of our Souls Righteousness and Truth for a Foundation of Christian Perfection, we must build thereupon Meekness and Gentleness, since this Vertue will make us fulfil the Command, of *loving God with all our heart, and our Neighbour as our selves*. In which the Holy Scripture says, *all the Law and the Prophets are contain'd*. And that because Righteousness and Truth do respect God: But Meekness and Gentleness do respect also our Neighbour. And tho' one were Just and True before God, yet he must be also Meek and Gentle, otherwise he loves not his Neighbour as himself; seeing he gives him not that Testimony of Love to which that Command does oblige. And because God only knows the Heart, it is not enough that one be good inwardly, it must also be testified outwardly by gentleness; otherwise

our Neighbour cannot be thereby edified. For this cause Jesus Christ hath said, That *we must learn of him meekness and gentleness*. He spoke no superfluous words, in distinguishing Meekness from Gentleness; but he gives us to understand, that it is not enough to have Goodness within us, we must also testifie it outwardly by Meekness and Gentleness toward our Neighbour.

Exercise your self therefore, my Child, in this Vertue; and beg of God to obtain Meekness and Gentleness. He will never be wanting on his part to give you his Grace to put them in practice, provided you do not fail on your part. This is one of his Commands, and he cannot Command us any thing but what he will give us Grace to observe. And Jesus Christ would not bid us *learn of him to be meek and gentle*, if he knew not very well that God will surely give these Vertues to those who ask and desire them; and if you do not feel them yet in your Soul, it is a Token that you have not been earnest enough in desiring or asking them. And that perhaps because you did not discover even till now that these Vertues were necessary to Salvation, and contain'd in the Commandments of God; and so have not laboured to your Power to acquire them: But you have simply followed the motions of your own Nature, which is not inclin'd to Meekness and Gentleness, but rather to roughness and fretting.

But our Nature is like a Horse, to which sometimes you must give the Bridle, and sometimes the Spur, to make it turn and go whither it is meet. And tho' it have a repugnance to act contrary to its own motions and inclinations, yet you must not give it loose Reins, and let it go where it will. For our Will is always evil, since it was corrupted by sin, and is no longer capable to make one good Determination, but it must be kept in with a Bridle, and govern'd by Reason, as a Horse is manag'd by the Bridle; otherwise it would precipitate our Souls into Hell.

Now your Reason may easily comprehend, that to be saved, we must keep the Commandments of God; and to be a Christian, we must follow the Counsels of Jesus Christ. It is therefore the Duty of that Reason, to bridle and manage this Nature, that it may walk in the way of Salvation, and in the sure path of the Gospel-Law, seeing you desire to be a Christian, and to save your Soul. You must not then obey the motions and inclinations of your Nature, but God, who has shewn us particularly what his will is, by the Evangelical

gical Counsel which Jesus Christ has given us, saying, *Learn of me, who am meek, gentle, and humble in heart.* He could not better express what God requires of us, than by those express terms of meekness, gentleness, and lowliness of Heart. For every one may by these words understand what the will of God is, and what he requires of all Christians. Endeavour first of all to attain to these Vertues, and thereafter if any other particular Knowledge be needful for the discovery of his Will, undoubtedly he will reveal it to you in due time; and he will never be wanting to shew us what we have a desire to obey; no more than he will be wanting to give his Graces necessary for attaining to Christian Perfection. For he desires our Perfection more than we do our selves; he will not then refuse us his Graces to attain to it, if we will but ask them with Humility of Heart.

For without Humility of Heart, no Prayers are acceptable to God; and our Meekness and Gentleness cannot be good, if it is not accompanied with Humility of Heart; for one may be meek and gentle by Nature, Dissimulation, and Hypocrisie. This is often a Sin before God, instead of being a Vertue; but that Gentleness which is seeming only, and Pharisaical, shall have no Praise but from Men; and Jesus Christ tells us, *If our Righteousness exceed not that of the Pharisees, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And this he says, that we might understand, that no Moral Vertues, which proceed not from the bottom of our Heart, and are not generated there by Divine Faith, can have an Eternal Reward, and they are recompenc'd only by the praise of Men, who being material, judge of things by appearance; but God searches the Heart, and tries the Conscience. Therefore Jesus Christ says, *We must have humility of heart, with meekness and gentleness;* as being Three things knit together, which cannot be separated the one from the other, no more than the three qualities of Righteousness, Goodness, and Truth, which correspond to the three Persons of the Trinity in God, and are always joyn'd inseparably in all his Works, of which if one were wanting, his Work would not be perfect. Even so Meekness and Gentleness would be imperfect, if they were separated from Humility of Heart: Which must infallibly beget true Meekness and Gentleness; for an humble Heart is always meek and gentle.

Try, my Child, by this Touch-stone, if you have attain'd to this Humility of Heart; and endeavour to obtain it from

God, and then you shall assuredly be Meek and Gentle-  
Which is the wish of

*From Holstein, near Gottop-  
Castle, the 9th. of Feb. 1672.  
St. Vet.*

*Anth. Bourignon.*

## L E T T E R IV.

Humility consists in the Knowledge of ones self.

*To the same. Shewing what Humility of Heart is; what are the marks of it, and how we should endeavour to attain it by the knowledge of the Infirmities and Miseries of our Souls and Bodies, and the blindness of our Minds.*

*My Dear Child,*

**I**N my last, I exhorted you to Humility of Heart: But I know not if you understand well what this Humility of Heart is, wherein it consists, and by what means you may discover if you have it or nor. Therefore I have resolved to speak to you more particularly of it, that in all things you may discern true Vertue from false, or that which is so only in appearance: And may lay in your Soul a good Foundation of solid Vertue, without amusing your self (as so many Persons of good-will do now adays) with seeming or imaginary Vertues, which in God's sight are of little or no value.

You have already sufficiently heard what that *Meekness and Gentleness* is, which Jesus Christ says, *we must learn of him.* Endeavour now to discover what that *Humility of Heart* is, which he teaches us in the same Counsel. For I shall shew you particularly what it is, what need we have to possess it, and what profit it brings to our Souls, that you may not want it through Ignorance. Humility then is the Foundation, and the accomplishment of all Vertues, and ought to be esteemed above others; and so we ought to labour more to attain it than any other Vertue, since of it self it begets many others, and roots out many Vices, which  
cannot

cannot abide in an humble Heart; such as Pride, Presumption, Avarice, Pomp, Vain-glory, and so many other sins, which proceed from Pride of Heart: But when it becomes *humble*, all these Vices are banish'd away.

And to know what *this Humility of Heart* is in its Essence, believe, that *it is a perfect knowledge of ones self*. For he that knows himself well, can never be proud, nor have any esteem for himself. He will not glory in the Praises and Honours of Men. He will not desire Riches, that he may be adorned or served: For an humble Heart is perswaded that it deserves nothing; and the least things do content and satisfy it.

An humble Heart is not angry for being abased or despised, for it sees by knowing it self that it deserves nothing, but is worthy of all Contempt. And the Reason why this is not practised among Men, is, because they know not themselves; and so they think themselves worthy of Esteem, Honour, Wealth, and Services; and this Conceit makes them Proud. For if they observed well whence they are, what they are, and what shall become of them, it would be impossible that they should in the least esteem themselves: On the contrary, they would see that they deserve all sorts of Contempt; being as to the Spirit, Frail, Ignorant and Inconstant; and as to the Body, full of Miseries, Infirmities, Diseases, and liable to Death and Corruption.

None of these things do afford Matter for a Man's Mind to exalt himself, or to make him esteem himself in any wise; but rather ground to be abased and humbled before God and Men, because of his Infirmities and Miseries. Yet we see Men make themselves Great, are Proud, and value themselves much, and in short, they judge themselves worthy of all sorts of Honours, Pleasures, and Services, every one advancing himself with all his Power: All proceeds from this, that Men do not know themselves for if they knew themselves they would be ashamed to glory in their Miseries, Folly, and Ignorance: For Man has nothing else in himself, and all these Defects and Miseries are annexed to his corrupt Nature. We need but open the Eyes of our Understanding to see the Miseries of our Mind, and how it is tossed by different Motions, and disorderly Passions.

And we need but open the Eyes of the Body, to discern the bodily Miseries, to which all the Bodies of Men are liable: And if we reflect from whence the Body of Man proceeds, and of what Substance it is formed, we shall find that



it proceeds from an unclean and filthy Matter, and from those Members of the Parents Bodies which are most shameful. Man therefore has no ground to boast or glory in his Original, since it is from so vile and base things, which should give him occasion of Confusion and Humility. And even the Beasts have more valuable Qualities in their Natures than Man has, as to the Body; for he would presently be stifled in Filth at his Birth, if he were not delivered from it by the assistance of others; and he would presently starve with Hunger and other Necessities, if care were not taken to sustain him: Whereas the Beasts can help themselves as soon as they come into the World.

And if Man will look forward into his Life, he will find that it is nothing but a Chain of Miseries linked one into another. What Feebleness is in Man's Body! He can neither endure too much Heat, nor too much Cold; a little too much Exercise wearies him; he must Rest and Sleep, else he loses his Strength and Health. The Body must be well cloath'd and fed, cleans'd and cherish'd, whereby the Understanding is occupied, in Care, Labour, and Disquiet, all the Days of his Life, to relieve the Infirmities of this Body. And to how many sorts of Diseases is the Body of Man liable? They are almost innumerable; and it is said that the Eye alone is liable to Fifty sorts. To how many then must all the other Members, since each has its particular Diseases? Besides the disorderly motions of the Passions, as of Fear, Terror, Sadness, Melancholy, Anger, Jealousie, and so many other sorts of Evils to which Man is subject during this Miserable Life: Where he has no subject of glorying or esteeming himself, but great reason to abase himself in the view of so many Miseries, to which his Sin has reduc'd him; so that he has good cause to submit and humble himself before God and Men, seeing he is so infirm and miserable both in his Body and his Mind; for the Spirit has its Maladies and Infirmities as well as the Body: For do but take notice of your self, and you shall find that the Mind is tossed with various superfluous Desires and useless Thoughts, which do often carry it away against its Intention, as the Apostle says, *That it is not in the power of Man to restrain his Thoughts*: Which every one may feel; for when we would fix our Thoughts to Prayer, or any other good thing, they waver here and there, and we cannot retain them. So that we may truly say, that it is not in Man's Power to fix his Thoughts; so infirm is he in his Spirit, that

his Reason has not force enough to stay the course of his Thoughts, which do often drive Reason whither it would not go. So that the Mind of Man is captivated under the Tyranny of his disorderly Passions, which do often lead him into great evils, even against his Will. This the Apostle complains of, saying, *I approve not what I do, for what I would, that I do not; but what I condemn, that I do*: This is a Proof to how many Evils the Spirit of Man is subject, as well as his Body; and that there is no subject of glorying in the one more than in the other; since both are equally infirm and miserable, subject to Inconstancy and Change.

For what Changes do we not feel in our Spirit? We can scarce reckon the Changes there are in one Day, of Joy and Sadness, Hope, Displeasure and Desires. How many different Thoughts? We love at one time, what we hate at another; what we desire one Day, is displeasing to us another. So that oft-times we our selves know not what we would be at; and we are often vexed for having obtain'd what we desired. And if a Man should write all the Thoughts and Desires which pass in his Spirit, he himself would be ashamed of his Inconstancy and Instability; and would be far from being proud of the Qualities of his Mind, any more than those of his Body; but would see ground of Humility for his Miseries. For there is nothing can blow up the Heart of Man to an esteem of himself, but a blast of Wind which the Devil blows into his Spirit, to make him fall into the Sin of Pride by foolish Imaginations, which proceed from that Wind wherewith he is filled, which in effect is nothing: For even all the Sciences of Man's Understanding, are nothing but ~~but~~ Figures form'd of this Wind, as we see Figures in the Air when we look to the Clouds; they appear sometimes as if we saw great Mountains moving, or Houses and Armies, and yet all are but Clouds, driven by the Wind, representing such Figures to our Eyes.

It is even so as to the Sciences of Men, who imagine that they are Wise, when they are very Ignorant. For I do not believe that they have yet truly discovered one Science, even in Nature; And how can they then in Mystical (or Spiritual) things? Thus Jesus Christ said to his Disciples; *He who seeth me, seeth my Father: But you neither know me, nor my Father*. Nevertheless, we will needs search curiously into profound Mysteries and Divine Secrets; and yet we know not natural Things which we see and handle. One boasts of being a Doctor in Physick, another in Divinity, another in

Astronomy, and so of all the other Sciences; tho' they be all equally Ignorant, of what they think they know well enough. And this proceeds from that Wind of Pride which the Devil has blown into their Spirits, perswading them that they are Learned, and worthy of Esteem and Honour; tho' they be indeed Ignorant and worthy of Contempt.

We see Physicians think themselves Learned, because they have read the Authors which treat of Physick; and those Authors are often as Ignorant as they who read and follow them: For all that they have written of it, are nothing but Figures in the Clouds, which move in the Air of their Imaginations; and what the Ancients have written is followed by Posterity. Thus they think to cure the Sick by Remedies coin'd in the Air of Mens Imaginations, who seem to have divers Figures of Sciences and Remedies; while they do nothing but Guess and Venture on the Lives of the poor Patients: And I believe the Physicians have kill'd many more than they have cur'd, (to reckon the most common and ordinary) and that because they have not discovered the Secrets of Nature, and know not the Constitution of Man's Body, nor the Causes of his Diseases, and consequently cannot give Remedies proper for them, but do often give Poison to kill Men instead of curing them.

There is therefore no ground to glory in being called a Doctor of Physick, but rather to be abas'd and confounded in being so Ignorant to the prejudice of the Sick and Patients whom they take care of. And as this Ignorance is great in regard of Bodily Physick, it is yet greater in regard of the Spiritual, which is Theology; for it kills many more Souls, than Physick does Bodies. And so the one has no ground to glory in their Learning, more than the other, being they are equally Ignorant, which do not add to nor pare the one from the other, but both have great ground of humility.

If the Astrologers also knew how far they are from the Knowledge of the Heavens, they would be asham'd to bear the Name, and would acknowledge that all their Wisdom in that is but Folly and the Fancies of Men, who have not attain'd to the Truth of that Science, and what they have written of it are but Imaginary Suppositions, far from being Truths. And upon the like Imaginations are founded also all the other human Sciences which are learned by reading or study. For when they are not founded on the Truth of God, they are altogether vain and false, and serve only to deceive Men, who by these Sciences do deceive one another, and hinder

der each other to come to the Knowledge of the Truth of God, and the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit : Which is the only true Wisdom, and in respect of which all the Wisdom of Men is but Folly, to blind their Spirits, that they may not come to the *Knowledge of themselves* ; in which consists the *true Humility of Heart* which Jesus Christ says *we must learn of him* : Which she begs you may do, who loves the Perfection of your Soul.

In Holstein, from Gottorp-Castle, January  
13. 1672. *St. Vet.*

*Your very affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon

## LETTER V.

Humility consists in the Knowledge of ones self.

*To the same. Shewing him that the true Knowledge, even of things most esteemed by Men, may serve to humble them ; such as the Honours, Riches and Pleasures of this Life. That all these are Vain, Disquieting, Unsatisfying, and Hurtful.*

*My Dear Child,*

**Y**OU have seen by my last, what Humility is, where I have shewn you, that it consists in the Knowledge of ones self ; and that no body can ever be Proud, but for want of knowing himself ; For in knowing himself, he will find matter enough of being humbled, by seeing the Miseries and Infirmities both of his Body and Mind. For he who will seriously reflect upon himself, shall not only discover his own Nothingness, but will judge himself much worse than nothing ; and consequently will be far from esteeming or magnifying himself, unless he be altogether a Fool, and void of all Reason and Understanding. For if he judge by an upright Judgment, what he is, he shall see nothing but Misery and Infirmities in his Nature, and Ignorance and Disorder in his Spirit ; for a Beast knows more things

things than he, for the Conduct of its Life : And is more moderate in Eating and Drinking, and other Natural things, than Man, who we see frequently exceeds in these things, which the Beasts do not. Hence is it that Men are much more subject to Diseases than the Beasts, because they commit more Disorders, and live in a greater Intemperance than they. And when Man finds himself more disorderly, and less wise in the Conduct of his Life than a Beast, he ought to be greatly humbled before God and Man, as being worthy of all Confusion ; seeing God has given him a Spirit more perfect, than to any Beast, and yet he knows not how to apply it to rule his Appetites or Passions, which do often cause him great Evils, and sometimes Death. This ought to be great matter of Humiliation to him, and Self-contempt ; and knowing this, he can never magnifie and esteem himself, unless he be void of Judgment and Reason ; which he wholly loses so soon as he gives entry to the Vanities which the Devil blows into his Mind to make him esteem himself.

Then he goes from one Error to another, because he is fallen from the Light of Truth, and knows nothing but Falshood ; which that evil Spirit makes him believe, and inspires him with the fancy that he is worthy of Honour, either for his Learning, or for his Wealth, or for his Vertue, tho' he is Contemptable even in all these very Respects : For his Wisdom is nothing but Folly before God, and his Riches are a heavy Burthen, painful to be born, and causes Trouble and Disquiet to preserve them ; and his Vertue must needs be feigned, when it is not founded on the Knowledge of his own Nothingness, or on the Truth of his Miseries.

Therefore Vain-glory or Self-esteem can never be any other than meer Folly, which Satan foists into Mens Spirits and Understandings ; since really there is nothing in them estimable, as to the Corrupted Nature ; but abundance of Miseries worthy of Contempt and Scorn.

So that we may truly call a Proud Man a very Fool, for he glories in his Miseries, and judges his Ignorance to be Wisdom ; and his Troubles, Riches ; such is Temporal Wealth which brings continual Cares and Disquiets, with a Thousand Troubles, both in the acquiring and preserving it.

Some of the Heathens having discovered this, threw all their Gold and Money into the Sea, that they might be free from the Cares and Disquiets of keeping it, and might live with Liberty of Spirit.

This

This should make Christians asham'd, who employ all the Strength of their Body, and Industry of their Mind, to acquire Riches, which are so burthenfom when we have them, and so hard to be preserved. Whereas the Heathens, by the Light of Nature only, despised them, and threw them from them; which they did, because they had the true Knowledge of themselves, and of Natural things. And this is the Reason also why they despised the Honours and Pleasures of this Life; and seeing them so miserable, and of so short continuance, some of them would not take the pains to build a House to lodge in: One was content with a Tub, for a Cover from the Sun and Rain; an other seeing his Hand would serve well enough to carry Water to his Mouth, would no longer make use of a Cup to drink in. So firmly did those Heathens despise this present Life, that they would not take any Pleasure in it, nor make use of the Creatures farther than for urgent necessity, taking the least they could, and rejecting the rest.

This they did, because they knew that all the Honours and Pleasures of this World are vain, false, and deceitful: And they despised them, that they might attain the true ones, which are Eternal. They longed therefore to be delivered from this miserable Life, which they looked on as a Prison, or a Valley of Tears, as in truth it is.

But Men now adays do not discover this. They think themselves happy in their Miseries, and rich in their Poverty; being pleased with their Chains and Bonds, through a blindness of Mind, and for want of knowing themselves, and the things which they so much Value. And thus they count him happy that can take his pleasure in eating and drinking, and recreations, or in giving other carnal Satisfactions to his Body. Yet such are far more Miserable than those that live meanly, soberly, and chastly. He who is content with a little, has no need of much, and is more joyful in his recollection of Spirit, than if he were in the most diverting Company.

Besides, he has no need to labour or trade much that he may gain Money. He also that lives soberly, is better pleas'd with his course Fare, than they are who seek to please their Appetites and Palates, which are insatiable. And he that lives chastly, preserves his Liberty and the Quiet of his Conscience. And he that does not delight in Company and Divertisements, is not afraid to displease Men, nor solicitous to be agreeable to them, as others are who delight in this.

In



In Cloaths and Behaviour they must conform themselves to the Fashions of the World, and for this must gain Money, that they may be well treated as others. Which requires a continual Care to provide for all, that nothing be wanting, that they may be in as good Fashion as others : And this is a Slavery from which we cannot be delivered , but by quitting the World.

For he that will please the World, has lost his Liberty , and can no longer serve himself. He is as a hired Servant, subjected to all sorts of Vanities ; subject and obedient to the Great and Wise Ones of the World, whom he fears and respects more than God himself. And in the mean time, Men think themselves happy to be thus engag'd and bound to the World and its Vanities, to which they willingly yield themselves Slaves. For if they desired to preserve their Liberty, they would disengage themselves from these Humane Respects, and withdraw from Worldly Creatures, and not let their Spirits be so far bewitched, as to think that its Slavery is Freedom, and its Fetters are Chains of Gold for the Ornament of the Body, which is meer Falshood and Vanity : For to serve God only, is to Reign ; and to serve the World, is to be a Slave.

Which those wise Heathens well knew, and therefore they despised the World, and its Honours and Pleasures. Yea, some of them cared not to be visited by Kings or Emperors, entreating them to retire from them, because they kept them from seeing the Sun ; adding, that they took from them what they could not give them ; to wit, the Sun-shine, which they valued more than all the Kingdoms and Empires of the World.

In which they had great Reason ; for the greatest Offices afford also the greatest Troubles ; and he that is over others, is Servant of all ; for he must take care of them, and Rule and Govern them, as he will answer to God ; which may disquiet and vex him all the days of his Life, and make him run the hazard of his Eternal Salvation. For he must not only render an Account of himself, but also of all those who have been under him, and bear for them the Punishment of all that they have done amiss, by Order, Tolerance, or for want of Instruction or Correction, according to the Justice of God.

Therefore a Superior is more miserable than another, both in Time, and for Eternity. This may be seen even in the Master of a Family, who must take Care and Labour to sustain

sustain and provide for his Wife, Children, and Servants, while they are often without Care, knowing that their Master must feed and cloath them in due time, that they may want nothing; in which they are much happier than their Masters, for they have only one Service to perform, and the Master is burthened with many.

Yet so great is the Blindness of Men, that every one desires Offices, Estates, Superiorities, and Masterhips; which they could not desire, if it were not by an Air of Pride, which the Devil has blown into their Minds; otherwise it were impossible that Men should seek after Offices, for they would do all they could to shun them.

Thus several Saints have done formerly; some, least they should be obliged to undertake the office of a Bishop to which they were chosen, withdrew themselves into Desarts, and even one of the Popes, considering the weighty Burthen of his Charge, exchang'd the Popedom for a Desart. So afflicting are Offices and Superiorities to those who know the Truth of things, and their own Frailty and Misery. And thus they despis'd them, and thought it enough to look to themselves, and desired not a Posterity to succeed to their Miseries, which they knew too well to desire them for their Posterity. They lov'd rather to live Chastly, than to beget Children as miserable as themselves: In which they were very wise; for in effect we see that Men wax worse every Day, and the Children are worse than their Parents, and the Grand-Children yet worse than they, because of the great Corruption that is now amongst Men, which visibly encreases every Day.

So that he who knows the Truth, will be loath to multiply this perverse Generation; but will wait till Men resume a true Christian Life, and so may multiply in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, a Holy Generation.

This is what the Wise wish for, but the Ignorant think it a Happiness to produce Children Heirs of their Miseries; for they do not know themselves, and they glory in their Shame without perceiving it: They would willingly be great and rich, that they may have Means to please their Senses, and these Pleasures do ruine both Soul and Body.

For since Man's Nature was corrupted by Sin, all his Senses are become Brutish and Insolent, and know no longer what is Good or Evil for them, being Intemperate, without order or measure. And therefore the Scripture says; *That the Eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing,*

to shew how insatiable and disordered our Senses are : The more the Eye sees, the more it desires to see : And the more the Ear hears, the more it would hear ; and they are never satisfied. It is the same as to the Touch, Smell, and Taste, which are the other Three Senses.

For whenever a Man gives himself to please his Senses, he is never fully satisfied nor contented ; for in every Place he may find something that smells unpleasantly, and tho he carry about with him Musk and Civet, that will not hinder him from breathing the bad Exhalations and Vapours of the Air, caused by the Corruption and Filth of the Bodies of Men and Beasts ; even though he had but the Stink of his own Body, since all that comes out of it is nasty and filthy, which cannot satisfy his smell, for it desires always good smells and agreeable ; and in loving this, we can never be content nor satisfied.

And yet less can we satisfy the Sense of Feeling, since the Body in desiring Softness is insatiable. We would have fine Linen, Silks, soft Beds, smooth Coverings, and other things agreeable to the Touch, which is not content with things that are sufficient. But the Sense of Taste exceeds all the rest in Disorder and Intemperance : For he that will please his Taste and Delicacy, renders himself miserable, and can never be satisfied. For when he has one kind of Meat that's good, he desires another that's better : The Wine is too sharp, and the Beer is too sweet, for his delicate Taste. He longs always for what he has not, and what he cannot get ; so insolent are Man's natural Senses, that they often tyrannize over the Spirit with a Thousand Tortures of Desires, Intemperances, Lusts, Excess, and Gluttony, which bring Diseases, Poverty, and Death. And yet they call him Happy who has the Means to satisfy his Senses, without discovering that they are corrupted by Sin, and therefore they beget all sort of Evils : Which she prays you may discover, who wisheth your Good.

*From Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, 15. of February, 1672.  
St. Vet.*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

L E T T E R.

## L E T T E R VI.

Humility consists in the Knowledge of ones self.

*To the same. Who is admonished to learn Humility, by knowing the Truth of our Corruption and Sin, which is the Disorder of our Natural Senses.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Cannot entertain you too much with an Account of the Corruption of Man, and of the Miseries to which he is subject during the Course of this Miserable Life, to prevent your ever placing your Affections on it; but that you may learn *the Humility of Heart* which Jesus Christ taught, which will follow upon the Knowledge of your self. But you shall never attain to it, unless you enquire particularly into the Miseries and Infirmities of your Body and Mind; for it is this Knowledge that must teach you the *Humility of Heart* which Jesus Christ requires.

For if you remain in the general Ignorance of Men, you shall never attain to it: You will still think you deserve Honour and Esteem, seeing others like your self honoured and esteemed; and that even they take their Pleasures and Sensualities more than you do. But believe me, (my Child) this Conduct proceeds from the Blindness of their Minds, and the profound Darkness in which they are, without perceiving it. Moreover, they blind one another by their practice. For one thinks he is as good as another, and that he may do what another does. Thus they follow one another blindly, and yet they think they see clearly, and that they do nothing but what becomes an Honest Man to do.

But how great soever the number of the Blind are, they will not help your particular Blindness; and this Broad Way will still lead to Destruction, though the number of those that walk in it be never so great. Besides, the great number of the Miserable will not lessen your Damnation; on the contrary, it will encrease your pains and anguishes, so far will it be from mitigating them in any manner.

Therefore you must not regard if others are Blind, and do not know themselves, but are full of Self-esteem, and follow their

their own Sensualities; for you shall not answer for them. Your own Works only shall follow you at Death, and according to them you shall be judged. God affords you now the Occasion of discovering the Truth of all things; beware of neglecting it, But bless the Lord; for it is a great Mercy he shews you beyond so many Thousands of Persons, who perish for want of knowing themselves, and for having never discovered the Truth of things as they are, before God. They amuse themselves to look at one another, and do not penetrate into the State of Man, nor know what he is, whence he came, and what shall become of him; tho' this is a thing of so great Importance, that our Eternal Salvation depends upon it.

I exhort you therefore to lay to Heart the Knowledge of your self, since this must rule all your Actions, and make you become humble of Heart, as Jesus Christ teaches us to be. *The Truth of all things must deliver you from all Evils:* This also is the Mistress of Vertues; for if you possess the Truth of God, it will teach you all sorts of Vertue, and deliver you from all Vice: For the Reason why Man is Vicious, and not Vertuous, is, because he knows not the Truth of things, and takes the Shadow for the Body, the Bark for the Wood, and so goes on from evil to worse.

For if he knew truly what Sin is, and what Vertue, he would deliver himself from the one, and cleave to the other; since he would see clearly, that Sin is a meer Tyrant, which tortures both Soul and Body; and that Vertue is Beautiful, Good, Sweet, and Pleasant. So he could not keep himself from hating Sin, and loving Vertue, for this is good and reasonable. But for want of knowing the Truth of things, we love what we ought to hate, and we hate what we ought to love. And to shew you what Sin is, know, that in it self it is nothing but a Disorder of Corrupt Nature.

For when God created Man, he was well ordered, tempered, and regular in all his natural Functions, and he might enjoy the pleasure of all his Senses without doing Evil; for all that God made was Good, and he created all things Beautiful to give Pleasure to his Sight; and all the Melodies of Beasts, Men, and every other melodious thing, to afford Pleasure to Man's Hearing; and all the Flowers and pleasant Smells, to give Pleasure to the Smell; and all soft and agreeable things, to please the Touch; and all good and savoury things to afford pleasure to his Taste. So that he could lawfully enjoy the Pleasures of all his Five natural Senses, for  
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all the other Creatures were made for the Delight and Recreation of Man ; who was so Perfect, that he used all these things only for his Recreation, in Order, Weight, and Measure, praising his and their God. And in this State he could not be disagreeable to him.

But after that he would needs shake off his Dependence upon God, and become Wise in himself, he overturn'd all that Beautiful Order established by God, and brought into his Nature all sorts of Evil, Disorders, and Corruption, and this is called Sin ; which is nothing else but a Disorder of the Five Senses, which Man cannot any longer satisfy without sinning, since they are corrupted and disordered. For if the Eye please it self now in looking on beautiful and agreeable things, this is only to satisfy it self, and not to refer them to God the Author of them, as he did before Sin. And if Man hear melodious Sounds and Harmonies, it is only to please his Hearing, and to recreate himself, and that in this Valley of Miseries, where he ought rather to mourn, embracing the Chastisements of God, because of Sin.

And if he will satisfy his Smell by good Odours, this is only to keep off the Stink that Sin has brought upon all Nature. And if he will please his Touch, this is but to defile his Soul by unlawful Pleasures, which he takes in Feeling : For it is not allowable for him to take Pleasure in any of his Senses, since by his Sin he has ranvers'd the Order that God had establish'd in them. And if he will satisfy his Taste, he shall fall into all sort of Evils ; for the giving up ones self to please his Taste, brings Intemperance, Gluttony, Poverty, Sickness, and Death ; as also Avarice, Deceit, Riot, and other Sins ; which proceed from the Pleasure of the Taste, which is as a Mother that breeds all sorts of Evils. For a Glutton must needs covet Riches to satisfy his Appetite, and if he have them not of his own, he endeavours to get them by any means he can, though it were by Falshood, or Robbery. For the Taste is unsatiable, and is not content with a few things. I have known Persons given to please their Taste, who have spent upon Dainties great Riches which they possessed ; and yet they were never satisfied, but they continually desired what they had not ; and when they had gotten it, perhaps would not taste it, but sent to seek yet some other things ; and thus they ended their Life in Poverty, and without any Satisfaction.

I have known others, that would come that length to take the Goods of others, to satisfy their Delicacies, telling me,

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that their Tongues could not be deprived of the Pleasure of Taste, and they must needs satisfy it. I suppose there are many such, though I do not know them: For the Appetite of Taste is so bound up with the Flesh, that it is hardly overcome, when once way is given to it, and Persons are habituated to the pleasing of their Taste; and this pleasing the Taste begets Lust also, for the Belly is near the Parts which serve for Generation, which are stimulated according as the Belly is well pack'd. Moreover the Taste breeds Gluttony, for when it finds Meat or Drink that is agreeable to it, it takes of them to Excess or Intemperance; which causes many Diseases, and sometimes Death.

For we see by Experience, that many have become sick, and even died, by too much eating or drinking, or Gluttonously eating things contrary to their Health. This falls out but too frequently.

And notwithstanding of all this, we see how many follow this Sense of Taste, which begets so many Evils, to the Prejudice both of the Soul and Body; and that because they know not the Truth of things, and imagine a Pleasure and Contentment where there is nothing but Displeasure and Miseries. For if they knew truly what is in the Five Natural Senses of Man, they would see nothing there but Vanity and Misery, since they were corrupted by Sin; and consequently they would never follow them, but resist them in every thing, seeing they are truly Vain; which may appear if we will examine them narrowly. For what else is there in the Sense of Seeing, but a Pleasure which is past in a Moment? If, for Example, you look upon any Beautiful thing, and thereafter shut your Eyes, in that Instant you see it no more, and as to you it is no more: And if after by opening your Eyes, you see it again, this sight adds nothing to your Soul, or Body, which cannot be nourish'd by Sights, though you should continue them from Morning till Night. All this cannot nourish nor fill us, nor yield any thing but an airy Pleasure to our Eyes, which will not be satisfied by these Sights; for the more they look, the more they desire to see. Wherefore the Scripture says, *That the Eye is never wearied with seeing, nor the Ear with hearing.* For these Two Senses are insatiable, and can never be satisfied; for the Sense of Hearing is as vain as that of Sight, and even seems to be of less Consideration, for it makes less impression on the Mind, and passes as a blast of Wind, which we neither see nor feel any more when it is gone. It is even so with Harmony and Sounds,



Sounds, for it is but a body of Wind, form'd in the Air, and dissolv'd by it, and leaves nothing in him that has heard it; no more than the Sense of Smell does, which gives only a small Satisfaction to the Nostrils, and flies away with the Wind, without leaving any thing in him that felt it; who is as ready to be filled with Stink as he was with Perfume.

So that we may see by Experience, that the Five Senses are truly vain, and unworthy to be followed and affected by understanding Persons, and such as would know the Truth; for one must be a Fool and Blind to place his Affections in things so unworthy of Man, as are the Pleasures of the Senses, which pass away like Smoak, and cause great Evils to those that follow them, both Spiritual and Temporal. For he that will give to his Senses their Pleasures, wounds both Body and Soul, and renders himself miserable through all his Life; for he can never have perfect Contentment nor Satisfaction in this World; and he waists his Goods to please his Senses; wounding his Health by Intemperance, and killing his Soul by Sin, which is the Disorder of the Five Natural Senses. For since they were corrupted, they have engendered Death bodily and spiritually in Man, who cannot love his Sensualities without turning away from God, and consequently depriving himself of all Good, and subjecting himself to all sorts of Evil; for there can be no Good without God, but all sorts of Evil.

This is, my Child, what I entreat you to discover; That you may never place your Affections in any thing but God; and that you may renounce your Senses, since they are corrupted, and contrary to the Will of God, and in themselves most evil and vain. For what is in Feeling, but a sensual Softness, which adds nothing to Man, and is so unworthy of him, that he would never seek for Pleasure in it, if the Devil did not persuade him that there is something in it? It is so frail and contemptible, that it is not worthy a Man's notice, or that he should account it a Pleasure, since it is but imaginary, and not real.

The Sense of Taste seems to have some Pleasure in it, since there are Persons who have no greater Pleasure in the World than to eat and drink well, for this Sense adds somewhat to Man's Body: Yet it is more full of Miseries than the other Four; for it does more hurt both to Man's Soul and Body; since by its Excesses it occasions so many Diseases, and even Death; and also so many Souls damn themselves, in striving to satisfy the Pleasure of Taste, which leads them to many

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other Sins, and withdraws them assuredly from the Love of God, who notwithstanding would have our Affections alone, for he is a jealous God; and yet we place them on things so vile and contemptible, as Meat and Drink are: For what is more contemptible than Meat and Drink? They no sooner pass the Throat, but they become putrid and corrupt; and especially the most exquisite and delicate Meats corrupt sooner than the more coarse. And yet People love them, bestowing their Pains and Labour to have and taste them; which is a gross Blindness of Mind: From which I pray God preserve you, that your Love may be fix'd upon God alone, and that you may know the Truth of all Saving things. In this Wish I remain

Holstein, near the Castle of  
Gottorp, 17 of February,  
1672. St. Vet.

Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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LETTER VII.

He that follows the Lust of his Senses,  
thereby renounces the Love of God.

*To the same. Exhorting him to the Effects of Humility, by the renouncing of his Senses; shewing him, That no Man can follow them, unless thereby he renounce the Love of God, which is the End of our Creation, and the Essence of True Virtue.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Deduc'd to you in my last, how vain and wretched the Pleasures of the Senses are; and I have shewn you the Truth of many things, that you might attain to that *Humility* of Heart which Jesus Christ teaches. It is much to understand these things aright; but you must also set about the Practice of them, and embrace in good earnest the Mortification of your Senses, in Pursuance of the Truths you have learned; otherwise it will be a small matter to know the

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the Truth, if you put it not in practice. Knowledge is very good, for we cannot practice what we do not know; but if this Knowledge be not fruitful, it can be of no use for our Salvation. We must be resolute, and war against our Corrupt Nature; otherwise we shall die the Eternal Death, after the Temporal.

This may be easily conceived, since Man's Nature is corrupted by Sin; and he has quitted his Dependance on his God, to depend upon himself. Of necessity then this Nature must remain in that Corruption and Sin, till every Man for his own particular, have overcome that Corruption and Disobedience which he has committed against God, otherwise he continues and dies in the State of Death and Damnation.

For tho' *Adam* had not sinn'd, all Men in general, and every one in particular, might have sinned and corrupted his Way, leaving off to depend upon his God; and that because all the Men that ever were, or shall be, are all created Free, and may continue in a Dependance upon God, and also may withdraw from it, if they please; (for God compells no Body) So he that is arriv'd to the use of Reason, has the same Liberty to Sin, and to withdraw from a Dependance upon God, that *Adam* had before his Sin; yet with this difference, that *Adam* at the beginning had not in his Nature that Frailty and Inclination to Evil, which Men have who proceeded from him after his Sin; for they have contracted this Frailty and Inclination to Evil from their First Father, and also the Infirmities of Body which we see in all Men, and feel in our selves: For no Body is exempted from the Evils which Sin has caus'd in Humane Nature; tho' it is free to all Men to follow this Inclination to Evil, which they feel in themselves; as they may also, by the Grace of God, overcome their Infirmities, and the Corruption of their Five Senses; and not follow them, but fight against them.

And it is in this that Jesus Christ says, *That we must take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence; and that the Violent take it by force*: Not that we should fight by force to gain the Kingdom; for God created it for us, and he gives it us freely. But the meaning is, that we must resist forcibly the Corruption of our Nature, that we may enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and so must not approve in us the Sin which *Adam* committed, nor by our Self-will quit our Dependance upon God. Therefore the Scripture says, *Our Life is a continual Warfare*; For we must continually resist the Corruption of

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our Senses : Without this we can never return to a Dependance on God, from which *Adam's Sin* hath withdrawn us ; since our Senses being corrupted, beget all sorts of Sin, and we need but follow their Inclination , to turn us away from God, and to keep us in the way of Damnation.

For we no sooner give loose Reins to our Sight, than it pleases its self to behold beautiful or curious things ; and no sooner have we considered them, but we covet them. And if we indulge the Sense of Hearing, the Heart delights in it, and the Affection is carried away by it. It is even so with Smelling, where the Sensitive Part takes Pleasure. And if we please our selves in Taste, all our Care and Study is employed to seek means to satisfy it ; and that Sense is more insatiable than any other, and precipitates into all sorts of Sins. Moreover, it excites the Sense of Feeling ; for he who satisfies his Taste, seeks also to satisfy his Feeling, and to give it Pleasure and Satisfaction. Even all the Five Senses are excited only by the Love we have for our selves, and the Desire we have of affording our selves Pleasure.

All these things do certainly withdraw us from God, and from a Dependance on him ; and he has commanded us to Love him with all our Heart : So that he will not have us to set our Hearts on things so Vile and Frail ; as are the Sight, Hearing, Smelling, Taste, and Feeling : For this is unworthy of a Divine Soul, which God has given us, capable of loving an Eternal God ; who desires and commands that we Love him with all our Heart. So that the Man, who places his Affection on his Senses, does voluntarily quit his Dependance upon God, since he does not submit himself to his Will, who demands that we Love him with all our Heart.

And this is from the Disorder which the Devil has caus'd in Man's Nature, when he makes it turn its Affection towards the Creatures which is due to God alone. In which consisted the First Sin that Man committed, and thence all other Sins draw their Original. For nothing can be Evil, or Sin, but what is committed against the Will of God ; and there is nothing but this that can be Evil , as nothing can be Good but what is done according to his Will.

So the Devil has earnestly laboured from the beginning of the World, to turn aside Man from the Will of God ; who created him that he might take Delight with him, and therefore willed that he should Love him with all his Heart. Now there cannot be Delight but with that which is loved, and therefore God will be loved by Man with all his Heart, and will

will not have him to place his Affection on any other thing; but on him alone. The Devil no sooner perceived this, but he enticed him by the Five Natural Senses (which are as Five Windows of our Heart) that he might withdraw our Heart and our Affections from God, and place them on visible and sensible things.

The Devil therefore did first move *Adam's* Heart to look on the beautiful Creatures which God had created for him. He excited also his Sense of Hearing, to hearken to the false Perswasions of that Old Serpent, who made him believe that he should know Good and Evil, if he did eat of the Fruit of the Tree, of which God had forbidden him to eat. He moves his Hand to make him touch that Apple, his Smell to smell it, and his Taste to eat it. And thus the Devil led *Adam's* Heart and Affection to the Love of the Creatures, and turn'd him away from the Love he ow'd to God.

If the Devil could have drawn Man's Heart directly to love himself, he would have done it; but because he is only an invisible Spirit, he could not move the Five Natural Senses of Man to love him. Therefore he makes use of visible and sensible Creatures, that indirectly he might make Man love him; and that by moving him to love himself, and to make use of all the other Creatures to satisfy his Self-love, and consequently to withdraw him from the Love of God. This he hath done with too much Success, since he made *Adam*, and all Men who were to proceed from him, to disobey God; and thus he made him abandon this Dependance, so that he would no longer depend but upon his own Will, and love nothing but himself.

Behold the miserable Fall into which the Devil caused all Men to fall in *Adam*; and all in general are Born in this Misery and Disobedience since *Adam's* Fall, and in like manner they come into the World with this evil Inclination of loving themselves, and following the Corruption of their Senses, which breeds all sorts of Sins, for they are now moved by an Evil Spirit, which is the Devil, whence no Good can come, since the Privation of all Good is the Possession of all Evil. So that he who is depriv'd of the Love of God, and would not deny himself, is deprived of all sort of Good; since there is no other Good but God; and he is fallen into all sort of Evil, that is to say, into the Privation of all sorts of Good.

God never created any Evil, but Man produced it, when he deprived himself of God's Friendship, in which alone

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consists all sorts of Good. And this is what we call Sin, which signifies the turning away from God, who is all Good, and in the Privation of him is all Evil. So that he who withdraws his Affections from God, to place them in the Love of himself, or of any Creature, has abandoned all Good, and embrac'd all sort of Evil. For there can be no other Evil but the Privation of all Good; in which Man engages himself; when he sets his Love and Affections on any other thing than God. And what *Adam* did once, by the Suggestion of the Devil, Men do as to their own particular as oft as they set their Affections on any thing else than God alone.

Observe a little, my Child, how often you have fallen into the same Sin of *Adam*, and have loved other things than God; and also if you are not actually addicted to Self-love, and withdrawn from the Love of God. But I am not surpriz'd at it, for you did not know that Sin consists in this, and no body taught you it. For the Men of this Generation are ignorant of this Truth, as well as you; and they who think themselves the most Vertuous, are all full of Self-love, tho' they think they are without Sin; so strangely does the the Heart of Man deceive it self.

But for your part, be wiser; for tho' all Men in general should go to Perdition, you must endeavour to save your own Soul. The great number of the Damned would never lessen your Pains, if you should be damned with them, but it would rather augment them by the Augmentation of Cries, Blasphemies, and the Noisomness of Fire and Brimstone, which shall augment in Hell according as the Number of the Damned shall increase. Therefore I counsel you to leave that common Tract of the Blindness of Men, who reckon nothing to be Sin but Material Things, which they have prescrib'd to one another to be evil. Things which God regards little, seeing he is a pure Spirit, whom not only these gross material things offend, as they decypher Sins, as Drunkenness, Theft, Whoredom, and other Material Sins, blameable before Men; but he is offended to see the Heart of Man cleave unto and love things so vile, since he created it to love his God only, who will delight himself with him. And yet Man turns away from God, and delights himself in the Satisfaction he takes in Eating, Drinking, Cloathing, and Re-creating himself with any other Creature.

Which greatly displeases God, and Man becomes his Enemy by Disobedience, while he acts against the Designs that God had in Creating him after his own Image and Likeness; that

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he might take his Delight with him. Nevertheless Man, contrary to the Will of God, takes delight in himself, and in the Creatures which are less than himself. For whatsoever is created under Heaven, is far below Man, who is as the Master-piece of the Works of God, and is set over all the other inferior Creatures; being made as a little God in his Divine Nature, which is shut up in his Humanity.

But the Devil, envious of Man's Happiness, from the instant of his Creation, strove to debase him, and to make him lose that part of the Divinity which God had bestowed on him. He rendered him sensual and earthly, that he might make him quit the Love of Divine and Heavenly things, which alone he ought to have loved; and then he would have enjoyed all the other Creatures at pleasure, as being Lord and Master of all, which were subjected to him.

But the proud Devil could not endure that Man should have Dominion over the other Creatures, and he himself be rejected and banish'd from the Friendship of God, depriv'd of all Good, and replenish'd with all Evil. He endeavours then with Rage and Envy to undo Man with himself, and to make him the Companion of his Miseries; and seeing Man made up of a Body and a Spirit, he insinuates himself into his Spirit, endeavouring to unite himself with him, under a Pretext of procuring his Good. Thus he makes him imagine that he should know all things as God, if he would eat of the Fruit which God had forbidden him; and these Thoughts being enter'd into *Adam's* Spirit, they gain upon his Affection, and make him forget the Love and Obedience which he owed unto God; beginning to love himself, and to seek out ways to please himself.

Now, God had given unto Man Five Natural Senses, by which he might taste all that God had created for him, provided he did praise and thank the Creator for so many good things. But he began to use his Senses to please himself, and to ascribe to himself the Graces that God had bestowed on him, as if they had been his own, and he had been the Sovereign of them, independently from his God.

For he pleas'd himself in looking on all those Beautiful Creatures, and attributed them to himself. He pleas'd himself also, to hear all the Melodies that God had created in Nature, delighting his Ear, without referring them to the Creator. The same he did in Smelling, taking his Contentment in all the good Odours which God had made to shew unto Man his Liberality; giving him not only things  
necessary



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necessary for the Sustainance of his Being, but also delectable things to procure him Pleasure; as are the Objects of Sight, Hearing, and Smell; and Man could well have subsisted without these Pleasures. But God would oblige him to love him by an excess of Benefits; and therefore created so many good and beautiful Creatures, only for Pleasure to Man; having created all sort of delicious Fruits for his Nourishment, and so many other Creatures to please his Sense of Feeling, that he might lack nothing either for Sustainance or Pleasure, but might use them at will, provided he bless'd the Lord who had made them for him.

But ingrate Man falls from this Acknowledgment of his God, and takes all his Gifts for his own Satisfaction; and thus he forsook the Love of God, and turn'd to love himself. Which has necessarily rendred him the Enemy of God; for such Ingratitude is insupportable, tho' it were committed but by one Man to another.

For what Man would be satisfied, to have desired the Friendship and Fidelity of another, having on this Consideration bestowed on him his Goods in abundance, and procured him all sorts of Pleasures and Recreations, that he might faithfully keep Friendship with him; if this ingrate Wretch should quit his Benefactor, to take his pleasure in these same Goods which he had so freely received? How much more then should God resent the Ingratitude of Man, while he places his Love, and his Affection on the things which God has so liberally bestow'd on him, and that to oblige him to love him? Yet Man has forsaken him, and pleases himself only in Self-love.

This you ought to consider well, my Child, that you may not render your self Guilty before this Great Majesty, and that you may discover, if you are not obliged to embrace voluntarily *Adam's* Penitence, since you have so often fallen into the same Sin, in quitting the Love of and Dependance upon your God, to love your self, and to depend upon your own Will. Resolve then to deny your Five Natural Senses, which are certainly actuated by the Devil. For since he got Power over the Spirit of our first Father *Adam*, he has thereby obtain'd it over that of all Men; and will have it so long as they continue to live in their Corrupt Natures: From which I pray God deliver you, and I ever remain

Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, 18 Feb. 1672.  
St. Vet.

Your very affectionate  
in Jesus Christ,  
Anth. Bourignon.

## LETTER VIII.

It is easier to love God than any thing else.

*To the same : To whom is shewn, that we must renounce the evil of our Senses, and that the right use of them ought to be referred to God. Also that it is possible, equitable, reasonable, and necessary to love God with all our heart.*

*My Child,*

I Will not believe that you are one of those inconsiderate Persons, who say, *That there is no great evil in following the Motions of Nature.* God, say they, created Nature, and he cannot be offended when we follow it.

Several Persons of my Acquaintance have been of this mind : They were given to Lasciviousness, and they would say to me, *That God would not punish them for this, seeing he himself had given them such a Nature; and that the use of it was needful for multiplying the World.* Thus they flattered themselves in their Sins, to satisfy their Senses. Moreover they would say, *God has given all these to Man, and we cannot be without Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Feeling.* All this is true; but they had not Light enough to discern the miserable Estate, into which Man is fallen by Sin, from that happy one wherein God created him.

For, in this, Man might enjoy the Pleasures of his Five Natural Senses, provided he lov'd and bless'd God. But since he fell into Sin, he can no longer enjoy them, without offending God : Because all the pleasure he now takes in his Five Senses, is only to satisfy himself, for his own Glory, and for his own Advantage. But before Sin, the Satisfaction of his Senses served only to make him praise, and bless, and glorify the Lord, for the Benefits and Mercies which he had received from him. So that he no sooner saw beautiful things, but his Heart was lifted up to praise God, who had given him those Beauties, those Melodies, those fragrant Odours, delicious Tastes, and soft Touches. So that all the good and pleasant

pleasant things that he saw or felt, gave him occasion to bleſs God, and to magnifie him for his Beneſits.

But ſince Man fell into Sin, theſe very things are to him matter of offending God ; for if he ſee any beautiful thing, his Heart covets it to pleaſe himſelf, and this Self-love withdraws him from the Love of God. This is it which makes Sin, ſeeing he has commanded us to love him with all our Heart. So that we cannot love beautiful things, without breaking this Command ; ſeeing all our Heart cannot be in the Love of God, when a part of it is ſet upon beautiful things, fine Smells, Melodies, the Delights of Taſte and Feeling. For then it is a Heart divided in as many parts, as it loves different things ; and conſequently it is very far from being entire in the Love of God, as he has commanded us.

But Men are ſo Blind, and do ſo blind one another, that every one perſwades himſelf he loves God, when he loves only himſelf. This is as if they thought to pleaſe God with Words, in ſaying with the Mouth that they love him, but they deceive themſelves ; for as long as they will ſatiſſie their Five Natural Senſes, they will not love God : For theſe being corrupted, will engender all ſort of Sins, and conſequently the Death of the Soul. Nevertheleſs, Men make no reckoning of all theſe Evils, and they think it is lawful for them to ſatiſſie their Senſes. Thus they follow them (often as much as they can) without believing that they do Evil, and without conſidering *that there is nothing more deceitful than the Heart of Man*, which often flatters it ſelf to its own Ruine. But you, my Child, be more wiſe, and learn the Truth of things, without ſuffering your ſelf to be deceived by falſe Appearances.

Never believe that it is lawful to take any Pleaſure out of God ; and far leſs that there is no Evil in following your Five Natural Senſes, ſince this cannot be without Sin. For tho' we give our Affections but for an Hour, to any thing that is not God, we are for that Hour turn'd aſide from God, and turn'd towards the Creature, which is Sin, ſince we do in this what God has forbidn ; to wit, *we ceaſe to Love him with all our Heart* : For we ought to Love him always, and at all times, without Interruption. We ought therefore to bridle our Senſes, and give them Laws, that they may take no other Liberty but to follow the Will of God. We may indeed uſe theſe Five Natural Senſes, and employ them to the Glory of God who gave them ; for we cannot be without

Seeing,

Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Feeling ; but we must not take Pleasure in these things for our own Satisfaction; we ought to employ them only in Things Necessary, and such as may serve for the Glory of God, and the Good of our Neighbour.

For Example: Man is made up of a Soul, and a Body, and he has need to employ all his Five Natural Senses, for the Preservation of both. He must see and look upon all things that may serve for the Perfection of his Soul, and hear, and and taste, smell and feel them, loving them as the Means of his Salvation : He must also look upon all things that he needs for the Maintenance of his Body ; to which his Five Senses may be very helpful : For he must see the things that are necessary for him ; as a House to dwell in, Cloaths to cover him, Food to nourish him ; all these things must be look'd to. He must hear what the Means are to obtain them ; he must smell them, that he may take nothing for his nourishment that's hurtful ; and taste and touch them for the same Reason ; for all things Necessary are good ; and it can never be Sin to use them for necessity : But it is always Evil to make use of them for satisfying our Sensual Pleasure, or for Self-love, because that is an Affection we have for our selves ; and our Affection and Love ought to be to God alone, not to things so base and vile ; which we may well use, but not love them, seeing God will have our whole Heart.

This was figured by the Earthly Paradise, where God plac'd Man at the Beginning of the World. He gave him a full Liberty to eat of all sorts of delicious Fruit, but he reserved that of one only Tree, of which he forbid Man to eat. And this, to make us understand that God permits us indeed to use all the Creatures which he has created for us, provided we keep our Affection for him only. Thus he forbids us to place it on any other thing ; as the First Commandment shews, *of loving God with all our Heart* ; That is, that our Heart ought not to be divided and parted to something else, but ought to be wholly for him. But Men do not pierce into this as they ought ; they perswade themselves that it is lawful to love several other things with God ; in which they greatly deceive themselves, since God's Command does clearly, and distinctly express it, to wit, *Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart*. If it had been lawful to Love other things with God, he would not have added, [*with all thine Heart*.]

We start Questions and Disputes upon so many Mysteries of our Faith, and so many Degrees of Vertue, and we neglect the chief part, and that in which all Faith and all Vertue does consist. For what will it profit a Man to have pierced into all the Secrets of Nature, and even into all the Doctrines of the highest and most mysterious Theology, if with all this he fulfil not the Command of *loving God with all his Heart*; but have his Heart divided into many diverse Affections? All his Knowledge will profit him nothing. We must therefore fulfil this First Commandment, of *loving God with all our Heart*.

I know well there are several Glosses to explain how we ought to love God with all our Heart. Some say, we must love him above other things, and that if we have one Ounce of Love to our Money, our Honour, our Pleasures, our Parents, or even our Selves, we must have a Pound for God; and that so we fulfil this First Command, and love God with all our Heart. Others say, we ought so to love him, that if the Case were that we must lose God, or our Wealth, Parents, or any other thing; we should chose rather to lose All than God. Others say, it is impossible to fulfil this Command. And thus every one endeavours to extinguish in the Spirit of Man, this Necessity of loving God with all our Heart. Which is very lamentable, and it grieves my Heart, when I see so many prefer these Glosses and Sentiments to the so express Commands of God. He added in vain these words, *with all thy Heart*, if we might place one part of our Affections on any Creature. Yet God never did any thing in vain. If he had not intended to shew, that Men ought to love him with all their Affections indivisibly, he would not have added, *with all thy Heart*.

Pray, my Child, consider a little with your self, If God does not well deserve that we love him with all our Heart. Our Being, and all that we have, comes from him; and even he gave us that whole Heart with which he desires to be loved. Would it not be a great Ingratitude to refuse him the Heart which he himself gave us, and that of purpose that we might have it for him alone? He lets us enjoy so many Creatures, provided we keep our Heart for him, which is the Only Forbidden Fruit.

Is not this the least that God could demand of Man for so many Benefits that he had bestowed on him? And ought not Man of himself to offer unto God his Heart, with all other things, tho' this had not been commanded him? All that

that we have or can have comes immediately from God; and consequently all ought to be offered unto him voluntarily, and without constraint. Moreover, On whom can we better bestow our Heart, than on God? And who can render it more happy than he? If we bestow it on our Parents, or Friends, they cannot make it happy and content, even in this World. If we set it on the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this World, all these things cannot satisfy it, since they are like Salt-Water; the more our Heart drinks of them, the more it thirsts.

Man therefore is very ill advis'd if he place his Affections on any other thing than God. None but he can Satisfie, and make us Happy and Content: Seeing in God alone is all sort of Good, and out of him all sorts of Evil.

Never rely then, my Child, upon the Discourses of Men, for they are Liars and Deceivers, and their Glosses are invented only to flatter their own Looseness, and that of others, who have no inward Light: Thus they say, It is impossible to keep this Command of loving God with all our Heart; and they say it, because they have no mind to do it. But God can never command things impossible: Besides Man's Spirit may easily comprehend, that it is not impossible to love God with all our Heart; for their is nothing more natural to Man than Love; and there is no Object more lovely than God. All that we see and know in Nature has some defect. Fire is good, in that it warms and enlightens; but evil, in that it burns and smoaks. Water is good, in that it refreshes and quenches Thirst; but evil, in that it is crude and cold. The Air is good for Respiration, and in that it purges away bad Vapours; but evil in that it has Tempests. The Earth is good, in that it brings forth Fruits; but, evil in that it is Miery, and brings forth pricking Thorns and Thistles. Gold, Silver, and other Metals are good, in that they serve for the Conveniences of Men; but evil, for their Heaviness and Obscurity. All the Plants and Fruits of the Earth have something of good, and something of evil. So have also all the Beasts of the Earth, Air, and Water; and Man especially is made up of Good and Evil.

So that there is nothing lovely but God alone, since there can never be any Evil in him; and out of him there is nothing Good to be loved, all being accompanied or mingled with Evil. Now Evil is not an Object of Love, nor worthy of our Affection. Man then is created to Love, and there is nothing more natural to him than Love. He must needs

love

love something, for he may be sooner without Life, than without Love, since nothing but Death puts an end to the love of Earthly Things; but Love which is in his Nature can never end.

It is created by God, who is Eternal; it shall also endure eternally. But this Love may have divers Objects. One loves good things, another evil, another those which are mixed of Good and Evil. Now he who loves good things, loves God, since there is nothing good but he, and all that's good in the Creatures comes from him. He that loves evil things, loves the Devil, seeing there is nothing Evil but what comes from him. For God did not create Evil, nor any thing bad; the Devil only has produc'd all evil, by separating himself from all good, and is by consequence fallen into all evil, which is nothing else but the Privation of all Good. And he who loves the Creatures, loves an Object made up of Good and Evil; for God created them all good, but the Devil by his subtle Malice strewed in Evil among the Good, when he gained Man's Will, who consented to this Mixture of Good and Evil. For God had created Man Free, so he would not hinder him to use that Liberty, which he had once given him. Man therefore is free, during this Life, which is his time of Trial, in which he may choose one of these Three Objects; to wit, if he will love God, or the Devil, or Earthly Creatures. Now there is no doubt but God is the most lovely Object; since in him there is no Evil.

Why then should it be impossible to love him with all our Heart, as he hath commanded? There is nothing so lovely as he; and moreover this Love brings us all sorts of Good; for God is as Powerful as Lovely, and can render Man Happy in Time and throughout Eternity. O what Quiet, what Joy, what Contentment, has not a Person even in this World that loves God! And how greatly shall this Happiness be augmented in Eternity! What Disquiet, Grief and Trouble, has not that Man inwardly that loves the Devil! For let him do all the evil he can, he is never satisfied nor content. For his Conscience can never be in Quiet; and he can have no other but a false and seeming Joy, because of the Sadness that Sin infallibly brings along with it. For Evil blinds the Soul, fills the Heart with dark and melancholly Thoughts, weighs down the Spirit; and tortures the Conscience as soon as the Pleasure of the Evil is over: And after all these Temporal Miseries, he must look



for far greater and Eternal ones; and that because he has loved the Devil, who can give nothing but Torments, having nothing else in his Power. So that this Evil Object is as little profitable as lovely. It is the same as to the Creatures, for we cannot love them without the Evils which they carry mingled with the Good, which God had put in them. Moreover all the Creatures, of whatsoever Nature, have no Power to make us happy, neither in this Life nor in that to come: For if we love Riches (which are so much loved now adays) we are their Slaves, because of the Toil we must take to get them, and the Cares and Vexation we have to keep them. Nor can they afford us any thing but a little Nourishment for our Bodies, and Cloaths to cover them, which a Poor Man can have also, and with less Care. And if we think our selves happy, because we can satisfy our Taste in eating and drinking Deliciously, this is only a greater Misery, for it causes Infirmities and Diseases, from which they that live soberly are Free. And if we love any Humane Creature, we are yet more Miserable, seeing we sell our Liberty, and subject it to the Passions and Inclinations of another. So that there is no Happiness for the Man that loves the Creatures, since they cannot make us happy in this World, and far less in Eternity. There is nothing then but the Love of God only that is lovely and profitable for Man; and no other Objects are so. From hence therefore we must conclude, that it is very possible to love him; and besides, that it is profitable and necessary, both for our Temporal and Eternal Happiness. Which I intreat you to believe.

*In Holstein, near Got-  
torp-Castle, April, 20.  
1672. St. Vet.*

*Your very affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

E

LET-

## L E T T E R IX.

It is easier to love God than any thing else.

*To the same. Shewing him, that to him that will deny himself, it is most Easie, Sweet, Profitable, and Pleasant to love God, and to keep his Commandments. It is Blasphemy to say, that is Impossible to love God.*

*My Dear Child,*

**N**Ever suffer your self to be perswaded, that it is Impossible to love God with all our Heart, as these Ignorants falsely say; for there is nothing more Easie, more Sweet, more Pleasant, more Honourable, and more Profitable, than to love God with all our Heart.

First, *it is most easie*; seeing Man is created to Love, and that Love is the strongest Passion he has in his Nature, so that he can no more be without Love, than without Life: Consequently it is very easie to follow this Natural Inclination, where there is no need to do any Violence, seeing the Bent and Inclination of Man tends thither of its self; and that it is easie to follow a Love, which is engraven in all the Parts, both of Body and Soul. No Body then need doubt that it is most easie for him to love.

But some doubt, *if it is easie to love God, being he is an Object invisible to Nature, and we cannot love what we know not, but with great Difficulty*; This Sentiment is altogether Brutish, and cannot enter into the Mind of a reasonable Man, who may see by his Reason, that there is a God, the Author of All Things; and that there is no Creature that has not its Origin from a Supream Cause, who is its Author and Creator; else they could neither have Being nor Subsistence.

For tho' Man be above all the other Creatures, he can neither give Light nor Heat to the Sun, nor uphold the Water in the Firmament, nor make the Earth Fruitful; all this must needs come from a Supream Cause, whom he may know by his Operations, which his Understanding may

may see clearly, even by the Eyes of his Body, while he contemplates the Beautiful Order that is in all Nature. We need but consider the Distinction of Seasons, the Production of Herbs, Plants, Beasts, and Men.

And tho' we cannot see the Author of all these things, yet we may palpably and visibly see his Works. The *Savage Heathens* did both know and confess that there is a God, the Author of Nature; and now adays there are *Christians* so unnatural, that they dare affirm, *They know not God, because they do not see him with the Eyes of their Flesh*. And from hence they would reason, that they cannot love him, because they do not know him.

In this they make themselves like the Beasts, who have no Spirit to perceive other than Natural things, and who see them as if they subsisted by themselves. But Men having a Spirit more noble than the Beasts, do comprehend even by their Natural Mind, that there is a God, the Author of Nature; which engaged some Heathens to set up Altars *To the unknown God*. Others of them said at the Death of our Saviour Jesus Christ, *Either Nature is dissolving, or the God of Nature is suffering*. These things ought to make Christians blush for shame, who now say, they cannot love a God whom they do not see. So they shall meet with greater Punishment in Hell, than the Heathens, who applied their Spirit to know God by Nature.

Whereas on the contrary, Christians do not study to know him, neither by Nature, nor by the Grace received in the Gospel, besides that which God gave to *Moses*, when he says, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*. It seems these brutish Christians do no more believe the Law of God, than they do Nature; since they say, that they cannot love a God, whom they do not know. For though they knew not God by his Works, which yet they see and handle; they ought at least to know him by the Law of God, which would not enjoin to love God, if he were not.

Seeing then there is a God, there is consequently an Object that is lovely above all things: And Man being full of Love, ought to be easily inclin'd to love him; for Love is always inclin'd to love good and beautiful things, so that nothing should be more easie to him than to love God, who is the Fountain of all Beauty and Goodness.

But all the difficulty that Man finds now to love him with all his Heart, comes from this, that he does not apply his

Spirit to discover and meditate upon the Works and marvellous things of God; and so he cannot know nor love him: But he gives himself to look upon the Earthly Creatures in themselves, and attributes to them the little of Good and Beauty that they have. And by this means his Affection is easily led to love the gross Objects, which are visible and sensible to his brutish Senses.

It is hard for such Persons to love God; they cannot love Heavenly Objects, since they regard only Earthly ones; as they cannot comprehend Eternal things, because they contemplate only Transitory ones. And this is not because of their incapacity, seeing God has made them capable of loving him; but because they choose of their own Free-will to love the vile Creatures more than him. And it is this depraved Choice that makes them say, *It is impossible to love God.* And they make this Impossibility to themselves.

They are like those who staying in a Valley full of Snow, complain that they are cold, and that they cannot be warmed among that Snow; which is most true. But if they would walk a little to get out of the Snow, and removing from the Valley, would ascend the Hill, they would soon find, that it is very easy to become warm, where the Sun shines.

It is even so with Earthly Men, who please themselves in the Snow of Worldly Lustres: They say and think, it is impossible for them to be warmed by the Love of God, which is also most true, so long as they remain in the love of the Pleasures of this Valley of Tears. For nothing can warm them in the Love of God, while there; all there is but Snow, which cools them.

He that has his Pleasures in Carnal things, cannot have them in Spiritual; and he that sets his Affections on perishing Goods, cannot have them on Eternal. And he that takes his Delight here in Sensualities, cannot take it in Spiritual Things; seeing all these things are Contraries, which can never abide together.

So long then as a Man feels himself cold in the Love of God, it is a sign that he lives yet in Affection to the Things of this Valley of Snow, which are Quenchers of the Love of God. He cannot then feel in himself any other than an Impossibility (or at least a great Difficulty) to love God with all his Heart.

But if we would quit our Affections to this Valley of Misery, and rise to the Consideration of Eternal Things, we should very quickly feel the Sun of Righteousness warm

warm our Souls, and the Love of God fill our Heart, which would not only find a Facility therein, but also Sweetness, Pleasure, Honour, and Profit; seeing in effect there is nothing more pleasant than to love God.

For my part, I have experienc'd, that all love to the Creature is bitter, and that the love of God only is sweet and pleasant: For when I loved Riches, they gave me abundance of Trouble to keep them. When I loved Honours, I found therein many bitter and piercing Displeasures, when I was not honoured as much as I desired. So that sometimes one Neglect gave me more Trouble, than a Hundred Honours gave me Content. When I lov'd the Pleasures and Delights of this Life, I found therein great bitterness; for there is none of these Pleasures that brings not its Displeasure along with it. For the Pleasures of Taste breed Poverty and Diseases, and they are insatiable; they never satisfy, no more than those of the Flesh, which resemble Salt Water, the more one drinks, the more he is thirsty. I have observed this in many Carnal Persons, who (after having ruin'd their Body, and their Health, in giving too much Satisfaction to their Concupiscence) used all sort of means to Cure their Infirmities; and this to the end they might wallow the more in their filthy Pleasures. And when I loved any Humane Creature, it was always painful for me to satisfy and please them; and the Fear of offending or losing them, was to me a continual Anxiety. So that there is nothing but God alone, whom it is easie and sweet to love.

Nothing also is more *Pleasant*; for all other Loves have Grief mingled with their greatest Pleasures. We see Young People Marry with Joy; there is nothing but Mirth, Plays and Dances: But the Wedding is scarce over, and sometimes sooner, when we see them sad and afflicted, pensive and melancholy, Diseases attack, the Care of their Affairs, and Household disquiets them, Fortune is against them; and at last, their Pleasures are many ways turned into Sorrows; the Pleasures of the Flesh into Pains, those of the Palate into Diseases; Honour into Contempt and Reproach; even as *Haman's* Pleasure, when invited to the Queen's Banquet, was changed into Displeasure, when he saw that *Mordecai* would not give him the Honour he desired. Thus all Earthly Pleasures do end in Displeasure and Sadness.

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So that we cannot find any other true Pleasure in this World, but that only of Loving God; which is very Pleasant, and also *Honourable*. For what Honour is Man capable of, that comes near to that of Loving so Mighty a God; who created Heaven and Earth, and all other Things, and upholds them by his Almighty Power, and can give unto Men Eternal Salvation.

If we count it an Honour, that we may Love a King, a Prince, or any Person in Authority; how much more should we think our selves to be honoured, that we may Love God, who is incomprehensibly Good and Wise? And what Honour is it for a silly Worm of the Earth, such as Man is, that he may Love God, who desires to be lov'd by him; and even expressly Commands him to Love him with all his Heart? As if God delighted in the Honour he does to Man, in desiring to be lov'd by him. And the Honour of Loving God with all our Heart, is so considerable, that it surpasses all the Honours that Man is capable of in Heaven and Earth.

Moreover, it is also *Profitable* for him, seeing that this Love can make him Happy in this World, and to all Eternity. Whereas all the Creatures together cannot procure us either the one or the other. For what Profit can we draw from the Creatures, who cannot give us a Day, yea, an Hour, or a Moment of Life? What could they do then to give us Eternal Life? All the Advantage that Men can derive from one another, consists in a little Money, Honour, or transient Pleasure; which for the most part ends in Pain and Grief, as I have already shewn.

We cannot therefore truly call them Pleasures, Happiness, and Profits, which Men procure to one another. Neither ought we to esteem that Honour, which is nothing but a blast of Wind, that is blown away by the Air of a small Disgrace, and so leaves nothing in him that was honoured, but a piercing Reigate, that he is no more so. What Profit is it for a Man to get of his Neighbour a little more Money? It is only a more weighty Charge to bear in this World, where the Richest are the most Miserable. For they can never have more of their Riches, but a little Necessary Food, and Cloathing to cover them. All the rest are superfluous to them, and must serve others, seeing he can take for himself but Necessaries only. What is over, affords nothing but Disquiet, Care, and Labour how to dispende it.

So that a Servant is happier than his Master. He has no Care, but for himself: But the Master must care for himself, and for all under him, and see that nothing be wanting to them, or else his Servants will upbraid and despise him. Is not this a poor Advantage that Men can afford, a little Money? And yet he that receives it, is obliged to a Thousand Thanks. And that also of taking a more Honourable State, which brings along with it more Care and Disquiet, than the Man had before he was so Rich. This shews that there is nothing in this World that can Profit a Man, or give him true and solid Honour, Pleasure, and Contentment. And that there is nothing but God alone, that can make Man Happy, in this present Life, and in the Life to come; since all the Advantages that Men can receive from one another, serve but for their Damnation. Their Pleasures withdraw the Soul from God; their Honours cause them to fall into Pride, and their Riches into Avarice, which leads them in the Broad Way of Damnation.

But so great is their Blindness, that they cannot see those Mischiefs, how evident soever they be. They persuade themselves that they are Blessings, their Disquiets are Peace, and their Displeasures Contentments. For how many are there in the World, who study all their Life to perfect themselves in some Science, that they may be esteemed of Men? How many are there that Toil, and Travel, and expose themselves to many Dangers, that they may gain a little Money? And how many are there who expose their Wealth, and even their Lives, to preserve their Honour? Though all these Things are vain, yet they love and esteem them, often more than they do God. For we see them not do that for him, which they do for the Creatures: They render them troublesome and hard Services, and they imagine to themselves, that there is more difficulty to Love God, than to Love the World. Nevertheless, *the Love of God is Easie, Sweet, Pleasant, Honourable, and Profitable*, as I have made appear. But the Love of the World is Disquieting, Sad, without Peace, Honour, or Profit, both for Time, and for Eternity.

Which you may perceive, my Child, by the Reasons which I have deduc'd to you already; which should open your Eyes to discern Falshood from Truth, that you may not give way to the false Perswasions which blinded Christians would establish. They say, it is impossible to Love

God with all our Heart, and thus they Blaspheme against him. For God could not Command an impossible Thing; but all that he Commands is Good, Easie, and Pleasant. And if you consider narrowly his Ten Commands, you shall find but two of Action, or Positive ones; to wit, that of Loving God, and the other of Honouring Father and Mother. The other Eight are but Prohibitions to do Evil; as not to Kill, Steal, bear False Witness, and the rest.

Is it then impossible to abstain from Committing these Evils; since these blinded Minds say, it is impossible to keep the Commands of God? Believe not these Falshoods, but constrain your self to get out of this Valley of Snow, which are the Riches and Pleasures of this Life; and ascend to the Mount of the Consideration of Things Eternal, and you shall find by Experience, that it is pleasant to Love God. To which she will lend you her Hand, who continues

*Your very Affectionate in J. Christ,*

*In Holstein, near Gottop-  
Castle, April 25. 1672.  
St. Vet.*

*Anth. Bourignon.*

## L E T T E R X.

To Love God is easie, and makes  
all things easie.

*To the same. To whom is shewn, that the Love of God is in its self most easie to attain; whence proceed the Difficulties that occur in it, and how to be removed; that this Love wonderfully lightens the Incommodities of this Life, and renders the observing the Commands of God and the Gospel-Advices easie.*

*My Dear Child,*

**B**ELIEVE firmly that the words of Jesus Christ are true; to wit, *That his Yoak is easie, and that his Burden is light.* And believe his Counsel, in taking his Yoak, and you shall feel

feel it to be such, if you will take it on you. I experience it daily more and more, and I believe you will experience it too, as I do, if you continue in the Resolution to follow Jesus Christ, and to become his true Disciple. I will not promise that you shall have in his Service Sensual Pleasures, or Worldly Riches, or Vain Contentments: But I promise you assuredly Peace of Conscience, Tranquility of Mind, Inward Peace and Contentment in your Soul. Which are all Things far more valuable than the vain Pleasures, the impure Satisfaction, and Abundance of the Riches of this World, which can never satisfy our Souls, seeing they are Spiritual, and consequently cannot be satisfied with Material Things.

This is the Reason why there was never any Man perfectly content and satisfied in this World, unless he loved God with all his Heart. None but such can be entirely contented: For only the Love of God is capable fully to satisfy our Souls; for they are little Divinities, which cannot meet with full Contentment out of God, from whom they proceeded.

You must Labour then, my Child, to attain to this Love: For when you have truly found it, you shall have all things, and shall Reign over the whole World, having in contempt all that is not God. And there is no need that you use Violence with God to obtain his Love, for he gives it freely to all that desire and ask it. And he even compels Men by an express Command which he has given them: But you must do a little Violence to your self to obtain this Love; because your Affections are carried to other things than him; so you must reclaim them, and constrain them to return to their God. And in this you shall have as many Combats, as you have Habits of loving other things than God. If then you be strongly wedded to Self-love, or the Love of other Creatures, your Combats will be so much the greater.

But the Affair deserves well that we suffer for it, seeing thereafter we shall enjoy so great a Happiness, both Temporal and Eternal. We should spare nothing to gain such a Treasure; the Trouble will soon be over, and the Joy shall endure for ever. You ought therefore to suffer willingly, that you may withdraw your Affections from Earthly Things, and place them upon God alone.

I have shewn you sufficiently, in my last, that this is Good, Pleasant, Honourable, and Profitable. It remains  
now,

now, that you put it in Practice. Examine once, what it is that you love besides God, and then detest that Love, and withdraw your Heart from it. And if you love Objects that are without you, flee from them, as the Enemies of your Good; loose your Heart from them, and desire no more to see them. And if your Affections be wedded to Self-love, break them off from an Object so little lovely, that you may place them upon God, who alone merits your Affections, and none but he.

Protest then against this Natural Inclination of Self-love, and yield not any longer to this Nature, but the things that are purely necessary; for 'tis your greatest Enemy, which you must not furnish with Arms, the better to fight against your self. You must know that Corrupt Nature wars against the Love of God, as far as you yield or give way to it: Give it then as little Satisfaction as you can, till you have overcome it; withdraw then your Affections from it. You must restrain it, as a Horse with a Bridle, that it kick not, and that it think of nothing, but to serve the Master whom you love.

This is the way to make you free, that you may love God with all your Heart; for as soon as your Affections shall be withdrawn from all the Creatures, they will assuredly be carried to love God their Creator; for the love of God is the Element of our Soul, in which alone it can live, and recreate, and repose its self. This Love of God is the true Centre of our Souls, into which they fall of themselves, so soon as they are disengag'd of other Affections, which are all vain. It is as with a Stone thrown up into the Air, which will not rest till it fall on the Earth, which is its Centre, unless it be kept up by Ropes, or some other Things.

It is the very same with Man's Soul, which is thrown into the Air of the Vanities of this World. There it can find no Rest, and if it were not detain'd there by the Force of the Engagements, and the Stays of Affection for the Creatures, doubtless it would presently fall into the Love of God, which is its Centre, and its Element, where it may live and recreate its self at its Wish; for the Soul has nothing more agreeable to its Nature than God, from whom it came; and it can never be at Rest till it return thither: And when it is compell'd to remain out of its Element, it is as a Fish, which by Nets and Lines is forced to stay out of the Water, which to it

it is very disagreeable, and causes to it Death, if it be not quickly returned into the Water.

The same happens to the Soul; when it lets it self be entangled in the Nets of Earthly Affections, it must quickly die, for there it cannot find an Element suitable to its Divine Nature, and so it languishes, withers, and dies an Eternal Death, unless it break these Nets of Earthly Affections, to return to its Element, which is the Love of God.

You must, my Child, labour in this, that you may break all the Bonds of Earthly Affections; and so soon as you feel an Affection for any thing that is not God, break it off quickly, for it is a Chain that keeps you out of your Element; and though it should be grievous to you to loose your Heart from any thing to which it inclines; yet this Trouble will quickly change into Consolations; for you shall no sooner return into the Love of God, but you shall bathe in Ease and Pleasure, as a Fish newly return'd to the Water, which is its Element. It is for this that Jesus Christ says, *That his Yoak is easie, and his Burthen is light.* He calls our Natural Inclinations a Yoak, because we must constrain and bridle them, and it is troublesome and grievous to bear them: For if we follow them, we precipitate our selves in a Thousand Evils; since Nature being corrupted by Sin, is inclin'd always to do Evil; and these Evils are often troublesome, and weighty to be born. I know, indeed, it seems grievous to us, that we may not in any thing follow our Natural Inclinations; but if we take on this Yoak for the Love of God, it will become light and easie to us, as Jesus Christ has taught.

There is no body that can excuse himself from bearing it, since our First Father, *Adam*, laid it on the Shoulders of all his Posterity. All Men in general, and every one in particular, are charged with the Miseries that Sin has brought upon Humane Nature. They are all subject to Heat, Cold, Intemperance of the Air, Hunger, Thirst, Infirmities, and Diseases of the Body, to Ignorance and Inconstancy of Spirit, and the disorderly Motions of their Passions; for Sin has brought all these Things upon Humane Nature, which God created altogether Perfect; but since all Men have partaken of *Adam's* Sin, they are also by Consequence subject to his Penitence.

This

This is the Yoak that God has laid upon Man's Shoulders to satisfie his Divine Justice: So that all Men that come into the World, will they, nill they, must bear this Yoak; for no body can evite it. And it is a Happinefs that Man has above the Angels, since he may obtain Pardon of his Sin, upon a small time of Penitence, such as this short Life is; for the Disobedient Angels were confin'd to Hell without Remission. Whereas Men are only for a small time sent into this World to do Penitence, and thereafter to return to God, from whom they came.

And therefore Men ought voluntarily to embrace this Penitence, that they may satisfie the Justice of God, since it is so short, and so light to bear, in respect of Eternal Damnation; to which the Angels were condemn'd when they disobey'd God. Moreover, this Penitence is light and easie, when we will bear it as a Yoak, with which God hath charg'd us for our Sins.

Therefore also Jesus Christ calls it his Yoak, and not ours, to make us understand, that all the Miseries of this Life are light and easie, when we receive them from God's Hand, and to satisfie his Divine Justice. But the same Miseries, or the same Yoak is very heavy and grievous, when we bear them grudgingly, or seek to be delivered and discharg'd of them. Which cannot be in this Valley of Tears; which is only a Prison of Penitence, where we must stay, until the time of our Penitence be over. Some have a longer time assign'd them than others, according to the Appointment of the great Judge. But if we will take this Life of Penitence, for a time of Delights and Pleasures, we must do an Eternal Penance, which shall never end, and which shall begin even in this Life. For tho' we should employ all the Industry of our Mind, and all the Strength of our Body, to Charm our Miseries, and to avoid Sufferings, yet for all this, they would not leave us. And do or say what we will, we must always feel Heat, Cold, Sicknefs of Body, and Troubles of Mind, Changes of Seasons, Revolutions of Times, and so many other Accidents which befall Man, during the course of his Life. All this must be very grievous and painful to him, if he do not take it as God's Yoak. But if he embrace it affectionately, as Jesus Christ did, all will be light and easie to him; as Miseries, Persecutions, Torments, and even Death it self, were unto our Saviour. Not that his Nature was insensible of the Pains and Torments which they caused him; but he suffered all for the

Love



Love of God, which made the most heavy Burthens, and the bitter Gall of his cruel Passion, appear to him Easie and Light.

If you, my Child, would be his Disciple, and become a true Christian, embrace, as he did, all the Miseries of this present Life; bear patiently all that befalls you, contrary to your own Will; and above all, deny your self, as Jesus Christ, your Captain, taught and practis'd. He made War in all things, against the Inclinations of Corrupt Nature. For because they tend always to Greatness, and to receive Honour, he chose Meanness and Contempt; and because they are bent always to covet Riches, he would be Poor; and because they seek always their Ease and Pleasure, he chose Uneasiness and Sufferings. So that he crush'd always the Inclinations of Corrupt Nature; constraining it by the Yoak and Bridle of the Love of God, and doing every thing contrary to the Inclinations of this Corrupt Nature.

Behold your Captain who marches before you, and who calls you to follow him; saying, *He that will come after me, let him take up his Cross, and deny himself, and follow me.* You must not, my Child, seek any other Master, nor hearken to any other Doctrine; for Men do deceive, and are deceived, being desirous to take another Way than Jesus Christ took; or desiring to enter into Eternal Life, by Means quite contrary to those which he himself used. For if there had been another Way of Salvation, Jesus Christ would have taught us it, and would have followed it himself; since all that he did on Earth, was to give us an Example, that we might follow and imitate him. If then there were any better thing, than to renounce our Corrupt Nature, doubtless he had taught us it. Never go to imagine then, that Men are too frail to observe the Law of God, and the Counsels of the Gospel; since both the one and the other were given us, only because of our Frailty. For if we had been Perfect, we should had no need of Laws. It is Sin which has brought these Laws upon Man.

Yet you must not think that the Laws are Evil, for they are very Good, and are the true Means of our Salvation. For without them Man had never known his Sins, and had insensibly abandon'd God, living without Restraint, worse than a Beast, not feeling nor knowing his own Misery. You must know that *Adam* was not ashamed to see himself Naked

they were

ked, before God called him, asking him, Adam, *where art thou?* Yet he had sinn'd, and his Wife also, in the Absence of God; and lived still freely after their Sin, as they had done before. But so soon as God call'd them, they began to fear, and tremble, and to be asham'd; which made them flee and hide themselves from God's Eyes, not daring any longer to appear before him, as formerly. The same Effect had the Law of God on Mens Minds in *Moses's Days*; for then also they had quite forsaken their God, and lived in a Neglect of their Duties, giving up themselves to all sorts of Sins, without knowing them. Therefore God would give them a Law, that by it they might know their Sins, and so abstain from committing them. This Law was made up of Ten Commandments, or Ten Things which ~~was~~ to Observe. It is not a Burthen that God laid upon Mens Shoulders, as some Ignorant People say, blaspheming against God. He gave them no Commands, which are impossible for them to observe; for these things ought to be observed in all times, tho' they had not been distinctly commanded or forbidden. Natural Reason might sufficiently have taught Man, *that he must not Kill, Steal, commit Adultery, bear False Witness, covet his Neighbour's Goods, nor take the Name of God in Vain.* And the same Natural Reason was sufficient enough to make them Understand, that they ought to *love God with all their Heart*; seeing from him they had received their Being and all Things; and were continually receiving Benefits for their Subsistence. The same Natural Light was sufficient also to make Man Comprehend, that he ought to *Honour his Father and Mother*, since they have brought us up, car'd for us, nourished, and taught us in our Tender Age. For Ingratitude is an Unnatural thing; for even the most Savage Beasts acknowledge their Benefactors.

So that the Law of God has not required any thing of Man, to which he was not obliged in all times. For from his Creation, he was obliged to love God with all his Heart, and to honour Father and Mother; which are the only Two Things that God has commanded in the Ten Commandments: The other Eight are only Prohibitions of doing Evil; to abstain from which Man ever was, and will be obliged. And the Reason why God declarest these things in the Form of Commands, is *Man's Infirmary*, who had so forgot his Duty, that he committed Evil without knowing it; and he would yet have become worse, if the Law of

of God had not been given him as a Voice to reclaim him, and to ask him, as he did *Adam, Where art thou?* For without this Law he had not known his Sin.

It is given him as a Light in the Midnight of his Dark-ness, and as a Medecine for his Evils. But Men now adays, call those Mercies, heavy Burthens, yea insupportable to their Frailty; which is a great Ingratitude, and deserves to be Punished, and that God should withdraw his Mercies from those Ingrate and Stupid Persons; since they overturn the Benefit of God's Law, and the light and easie Yoke of the Gospel, into Chastisements and insupportable Burthens; saying, That it is impossible to observe them; and thus they Bely the Word of Jesus Christ; to wit, *that his Yoke is easie, and his Burthen light.*

Believe your Saviour, my Child, and do not hearken to these Liars, who say the contray. Resign your self to God; embrace the Law of the Gospel; and you shall know by Experience that his Yoke is easie, and that his Burthen is light. Which she assures you of, who remains

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, 26 of April,  
1672. St. Vet.*

*Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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LET-

# LETTER XI.

That we must always advance in Vertue, and never stop in the Way.

*To the same: To encourage him in the Way of his Vertue; although the Beginning be Difficult, because of the Temptations with which the Devil vexes them who have resolved to embrace True Vertue.*

*My Dear Child,*

**N**Ever weary in the Service of God: The Beginning of it is the most Difficult. You know that Rose Bushes bear Thorns before they bear Roses: It is the same as to True Vertue. It begins with Thorns a little pricking to our Natural Sentiments: But beautiful Roses will come in their Season. True Vertue has nothing pricking in it, no more than the Rose; for it is altogether Sweet, and Beautiful, and Fragrant. Nothing is more Pleasant than Vertue. It gives Peace and Pleasure to the Soul; for Peace and Joy are Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

O what Peace and Contentment has a Vertuous Soul! It seeks nothing, fears nothing, and hopes for nothing, but in the Promises of God: It rests upon his Providence: It yields it Self to be guided sweetly at the Will and Pleasure of the Lord: It is not disquieted nor vexed about any thing, but waits in Peace how God will Dispose: It affects nothing, and precipitates nothing, knowing that Patience, and Long-suffering, are the Fruits of the Holy Spirit: It is meek in it Self, and toward its Neighbour; for Goodness, Meekness, and Gentleness, are Fruits of the Holy Spirit, which he brings forth in the Soul that he Possesses: A Vertuous Soul is always Modest and Moderate in all its Actions; Chast, Content, and full of Charity; because the Holy Spirit, who works in it True Vertue, produces there also his Twelve Fruits, which are sweet and agreeable to God and Men: So that True Vertue is desirable for the Sweetness it has in it Self: It is desirable for its Beauty, for nothing is more agreeable and beautiful than True Ver-

Vertue; for all good Men do Honour and Esteem it, it being lovely, and to be valued above all Created things: It can well abide a narrow Search and near View; for the nearer we approach it, the more we discover its Beauty: It is also Fragrant, as the Rose; for True Vertue has a sweet Savour in the Nostrils of every one, even of the Wicked, who often are obliged to esteem it, tho' they will not follow it. And if we hear sometimes well enclined Persons despise True Vertue, it is because they know it not, and they have been often deceived with apparent Vertues, where-with Men abound now; and this is the Reason that True Vertue is not so well received as it ought. But tho' it be not known nor esteemed by Men, yet it is Pleasant, Beautiful, and of a sweet smelling Savour before God, who loves True Vertue as his Spouse, for it is united unto him inseparably.

Therefore, my Child, you must endeavour to acquire this Beautiful Rose of True Vertue, even tho' you should feel the pricking of Thorns in gathering it. These Pains will quickly be gone, and the Beautiful Rose of True Vertue will never fade. It shall be eternally Beautiful, and of a good Savour before God; so you must spare nothing to acquire True Vertue. If you feel Trouble in this, it will turn into Quiet; if you feel Grief, it will change into Joy; if you find Repugnance, it shall be changed into Contentment. For the Beginning only is Difficult in the acquirement of True Vertue.

The Reason is, because the Devil then uses all Means to divert us from it. He knows well that he can gain nothing upon us when we have once acquired it; so he makes all his Efforts in the Beginning, that he may hinder us from ever attaining to it. Therefore the Scripture says, *My Son, if thou wilt embrace True Vertue, prepare thy Heart for Temptation.*

But the Devil leaves them in Quietness, who have only apparent Vertues; or those who have only good Desires; because he can Ensnare them at his Pleasure. The First, by a Presumption of their Salvation, because of their seeming Vertues: And the other, by Precipitating them into Death, before they have brought their good Desires to effect; for he knows well, that all Hell is pay'd with Good-Wills, which Men had in this World, without putting them in Practice. Therefore he leaves all such Persons in Quiet, as well as the Worldlings; knowing well that he shall not miss them at one time or other, and thus he leads them

66 *That we must always advance in Vertue, Part I.*

softly to Hell with a Silken Rope, without Vexing or Tempting them much.

But such as have truly resolved to follow Jesus Christ, and to embrace Solid Vertue; he labours Night and Day to Tempt them, and that by all Means; as well knowing, that he needs no longer pretend to it, when once they have attain'd to True Vertue. They shall then laugh at him, and his Assaults; and therefore he endeavours to shake them at the Beginning, and to make them lose their Heart, considering the Difficulty in the acquiring of True Vertue.

For he shews them the Pains and Thorns they shall meet with in the Mortification of their Senses; then the Impossibility of attaining to so great Perfection. He represents to them also the Example of others whom they esteem to be good Men, and aiming at True Vertue. For it is enough to them to make a morally good Out-side, without being at the Trouble to mortifie their Five Natural Senses, or to deny themselves: And the Devil perswades them that this is not Necessary for their Salvation; but he is nothing but a Deceiver and Seducer of Souls, that in the End he may make them Partakers of his Miseries.

Beware, my Son, of his Deceits, and give no ear to his Suggestions, nor to the Infirmities of your own Nature; for neither of these can hinder you from attaining to True Perfection, provided you have a firm Resolution; God will assist you, and will give you all that you need, if you continue Faithful to him: And after you shall see, that through God you can do all things, and shall say with *David, with my God I leap over Walls.* For so great is the Power of True Vertue that it makes appear light the Things that are most grievous to Nature.

This is it which Jesus Christ intended by the Comparison, *If you had Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed, you should remove Mountains.* To remove Mountains of Stone and Sand would be no great Marvel, since this would add nothing to our Souls. But he speaks of Mountains of Difficulties which we find in the Acquisition of True Vertue. It appears at the Beginning as an Unhabitable Mountain to which one can never reach.

But if a Soul persevere Faithfully in its good Resolution, it will revive by Faith in the Promises of God; and with it the Soul will remove all these Mountains of imaginary Difficulties; since in effect there is no Difficulty in the acquiring of True Vertue. We no sooner abandon  
Earthly

Earthly Affections, but we ascend with ease unto True Perfection; for all the Difficulties which we apprehend, are nothing but false Faces, which the Devil has plac'd as Vizards, to frighten those who Begin in True Vertue. But we need not fear; for the Mask being taken off, we find True Vertue, which is Sweet, Pleasant, and Agreeable: And he who has once discovered and known it, finds no Difficulty in it afterwards; but on the contrary, much Peace and Consolation; though the Devil will never cease to Tempt and Pursue us. He tempted Jesus Christ, and pursued him even to the Desert, whither he had gone by the Conduct of God's Spirit.

Therefore we must not be shaken by the Temptations wherewith the Devil Assaults us; but we must despise him as an Enemy of God, and one who has no Power over Man, but what Man himself gives him; otherwise the Devil is in his Nature meer Impotence, who could not lift a Pile of Straw from the Ground, if Man did not permit him. Man then, when he is in the Grace of God, may well mock at the Devil, seeing then he cannot hurt him. He spies and goes about him indeed who is in the Grace of God, but he cannot Hurt him; unless he fall from this Grace, or consent to the Temptations and Suggestions of the Devil:

It is nothing to feel Temptations, tho' they should continue all the Days of our Life, provided we do not consent to them. They signifie no more than Smoak that evanishes in the Air. It is not very agreeable, but it can do him no Harm who comes not near it. Even so is it with the Temptation of the Devil; it evanishes, if we do not follow it. It is the Devil's Work to Tempt, but Man's to Resist it. Therefore St. Peter says, *My Brethren, watch and be sober, for your Adversary the Devil goes about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour; resist him therefore, being stedfast in the Faith.* This he says to teach us, that we must not sleep in the Service of God, nor give up to follow our Appetites; but that we must be Sober, and Watch with Perseverance, for we have an Enemy who never Sleeps. We must overcome him by the Strength of Faith, which is able to remove the greatest Mountains of Difficulties, that can ever be presented to our Understanding.

And tho' the Devil tempt us Night and Day, he cannot hurt our Soul, provided it continue in the Faith, which begets Hope in the Promises of God; and he has said, *Come to me all ye that are heavy Laden, and I will give you Rest*



68 *That we must always advance in Vertue, Part I.*

*Rest.* He excepts none, but calls all Men in general, and every one in particular, saying, *they must come to him, if they be heavy Laden*, and he promises to ease us. What greater Security could we ask? *Here is the Promise of God himself*; for he says, that he will Comfort us, if we go to him in need.

I am apt to believe, my Child, that you are burthened with Temptations from the Devil, for he sees that you seek after True Vertue; and so he will not fail to attack you in the Beginning, and so much the more, that you have given him Advantage over your Soul by your past Sins. He will not part with this Fortrefs, but by force, seeing he has so long been Ruler and Governour there. You must now then drive him out of it by force, and it is thus only; *That the Kingdom of Heaven suffers Violence, and that the Violent take it by force.* For we are the Children of God, and consequently the Heirs of his Kingdom; so we have no need to take that Kingdom by force. It is given us freely of God. But we must use great force to resist the Devil, and our Corrupt Nature, which are the Two Enemies of our Souls, who would rob us of this Kingdom, though it belong to us, as the Inheritance of our Heavenly Father: And this is the Reason why he says, *that the Violent ravish it, and that it must be taken by force.*

Not that we must fight with Weapons of Iron to gain this Kingdom, for all the Bodily Force of Nature together could not carry it; but we must fight our Enemies with Spiritual Weapons, of which the chief is Faith; seeing it begets Love and Hope toward God, which are the Two Bucklers to defend us against all sorts of Enemies.

For he who loves God, is afraid of nothing, seeing *Love is strong as Death*, and he that putteth his Trust in God shall never be confounded. So that the Devil shall never have Power over him that resists him by the Strength of Faith. Fear nothing then, my Son; persevere in the good Resolution of attaining to True Vertue. Set all your Affections to love God, and you shall be strong as Death. Place your Hope in God alone, and you shall never be confounded nor deceived. For having these Weapons, you need not fear the Assaults of your Enemy the Devil. He is as a chain'd Dog, and can go no farther than the Chain of Man's Consent goes. If he come to vex you in the Night, during Sleep, this cannot hurt you, seeing Man does not use his Free-will while he Sleeps; and so he cannot consent to the Tentation of

of the Devil, which he knows full well : But he comes to vex Man in Sleep, that he may get him to consent (when awakened) to Evil Suggestions, which he excited in his Spirit while asleep ; for a Man asleep cannot Sin..

But be ready to lift up your Spirit to God as soon as you awake, and then the Tentation shall vanish as Smoak. But if you amuse your self with revolving in your Spirit the thing that you dream'd by the Tentation of the Devil; and give your consent thereto, or take pleasure in it; then shall you fall into Sin, and consent to the Devil, who is never more readily overcome than when we despise him. I advise you therefore never to regard Dreams or Evil Thoughts which he represents to you, while asleep, nor even those which he offers you when you are awake; for you cannot Sin, so long as you take no pleasure in them, nor consent unto them.

And tho' you should be tormented all the Days of your Life with Evil Thoughts, this will not make you lose the Grace of God, so long as they are displeasing to you. Yet you have cause to be humbled before God, for your former Sins; for if you had never given a willing Entry to Evil Thoughts, the Devil would never have had the Power to cause you to have them afterwards against your Will. But what is past is no longer in your Power. It remains only that you strive for the time to come, and never more to return to them. Continue therefore Faithful to God, and persevere in the good Resolution you have taken to find True Vertue. Never weary in this Search; it well deserves that you endure some Trouble; for even Worldlings endure yet much more in the Service of the World. For what Disquiets, Cares, and what Travels, does not a Merchant endure to gain a little Money? What Pains must not a Gentleman take to preserve his Honour? What Toil has the Labourer and the Tradesman to gain their Food? which you have in the Service of God without Trouble. Will you not then suffer a little Tentation of the Devil, that you may attain to True Vertue? which is to buy it at a very easie Rate.

For all that the Devil can do to you is inconsiderable, in respect of the Joy that attends you in Heaven, if you endure with Perseverance. He may well disturb your Spirit, with divers Temptations; but he can never make you fall into Sin, unless your own Will consent to it. For when you have yielded it up unto God, he will carefully keep it,

70 *That we must always advance in Vertue, &c. Part I.*

and will not permit that the Devil gain it to make it consent unto Evil. What else the Devil can do you, is but a small matter, he should have no Power over your Will, if he had not had so formerly, nor could he so often Trouble and Disquiet you. For I perceive often the Contradictions which he gives me by you against your Will. He knows that I follow the Will of God, and he contradicts it to his Power; but he cannot hinder me from knowing and practising it: Thus he hinders you from following it, and causes you to contradict it often in small things, because he cannot make you to oppose it in great things.

I know well that this is against your Will; and that what falls out against it, comes assuredly from the Devil; for a Man cannot be contrary to his own Will. What he wills, he desires; and what he desires, he effectuates so far as he can. The Devil therefore does in him all that he does against his own Will.

If you comprehend this well, my Son, you will yet resist him more, and will not any longer give me so much Trouble, by contradicting the Will of God. Which by his Grace, I know both in things great and small. It you must follow to your Power. But you have not yet sufficiently discovered the subtil Wiles of this Old Serpent; nor have you overcome your self, nor humane Respects, which are the Chains that yet hinder your Flight unto God. But do not lose Courage: If I have overcome the World, you may overcome it also, and shall become Master of the Devil and of your Self. God is neither Partial, nor a Respector of Persons. He bestows his Grace on all those that seek and desire it in Truth. I wish you these Desires, and I continue

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, the 27 of April,  
1672. St. Vet.*

*Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

L E T.

## L E T T E R XII.

The Devil, the Enemy of True Vertue,  
opposes it with all manner of Devices.

*To the same : Shewing him that it is necessary to know the Wiles of the Devil, with which he opposes True Vertue, that we may evite them, which are shewn in this and the following Letters; as First, That the Devil insinuates himself into what is Sensual in Man: Secondly, That he suits himself to the Impulses and Inclinations of every one, leaving the rest in Quietness.*

*My Dear Child,*

**I** Spoke much to you in my last, of the Tentation of the Devil; because it is as necessary for you to know this in order to your Salvation, as it is to know True Vertue. For if you know only Good, you will easily fall into Evil, without perceiving it; and so through Ignorance you will sometimes follow Evil, thinking that you do well. But since I have undertaken to teach you all things necessary to Salvation, I must also speak to you of the Malice of the Devil, and how he tempts Men to lead them to Perdition; as he has already led many, even such as never discovered that it was the Devil who incited them to do Evil, and so they let themselves be seduced by him insensibly; tho' otherwise they were of good Inclinations, yet they were lost by Ignorance.

For Ignorance does not excuse before God. Every one is obliged to know what he ought to do and avoid, that he may please the Lord. If then I should now speak to you only of the Beauty and Excellency of Vertue; and you knew not the Wiles that Satan uses to hinder Men from attaining to it, doubtless you would never come at it. He would entrap you in the Way by one Means or other. So that I judge it more necessary, that you know the Malice of the Devil, and Power he has over Men. when he is unknown to them; than to teach you the highest Mysteries of Theology. For all the Sciences together cannot make

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you Holy; but the Malice of the Devil would lead you to Damnation, if you do not know it.

I entreat you therefore to apply your Mind diligently to comprehend, that all sorts of Evil come from the Devil, as all sorts of Good come from God. There are only these two things that are Good and Evil. So that all that is Good, in Heaven, in Earth, in all the Creatures, in all Places, comes immediately from God; and all that's Evil in all these things, comes from the Devil. For he being by his Sin separated from God, is fallen into all Evil. There is no Good, but in God alone; and in the Privation of Good, consists all Evil. All this is Infallible.

Evil then is no Real Thing, and God never gave it a Being. Now, all Good has always been in God; from whence it follows, that the Privation of all Good is wholly Evil. So that the Devil being separated from God (who is all Good) is consequently fallen into all Evil, which is nothing else but a Privation of all Good. This wretched Nothing is the Devil, who of his own Free-will would needs separate himself from all Good; and it is this Separation that makes all Evil. Yea, there can be no other Evil, but the Separation from Good, seeing God never created Evil. Now, nothing can have a Being, but what God created; and having never created Evil, it can therefore be nothing else but an accursed Nothing, which we call Evil. And this Evil is in its Essence in the Devil, as Good is in God without mixture: For there can be no Evil in God, and there can be no Good in the Devil.

But we find this Mixture in the other Creatures, who partake of Good from God, and of Evil from the Devil; and so they may have a Mixture of these two Things; and are Good or Evil according as they partake of the one or the other. God gave unto Man all manner of Good in abundance, for he was able to give it. And the Devil (that Impotence) has given nothing to Man but so much Evil, as he has obtained consent from the Free-will of Man, and no more; for he is nothing but a wretched Impotence.

And that you may understand that the Wickedness of the Devil, and the Sin of Man are but Nothings, you need but consider what we see and touch in Nature. For we evidently see that Hunger and Thirst is but the Privation of Eating and Drinking; Cold is but the Privation of Heat, Death the Privation of Life; and so is it with all other sort of Evils, which befall Man; which are nothing else but

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but the Privation of the Good Things which he needs for his Temporal and Eternal Subsistence.

For tho' we say, that there are in Hell, Pains and Torments, Fire, Ice, Sadness, Bitterness, and many other Sorrows: All these Evils are in effect nothing but the Privation of the Good Things, that Man in Blessedness should have had; to wit, all sorts of Contentments in God, all Pleasure, all Satisfaction and Refreshment; all sort of Delights; Sweetness, Peace, and Joy Eternal. But the Privation of all these things makes the Torments and Sufferings of Hell; so that there is no need of Fire, Ice, and Material Famine there. To make the Soul of Man suffer all sorts of Evil, it is enough that it be deprived of all Good.

This we may perceive yet more clearly in a new-born Infant. If it be left without the Good of Assistance, it is reduc'd to all sort of Evil, and it will die, without our touching it, or doing it any Evil; for we deprive it of Life, by depriving it of Assistance. It is altogether the same as to the Wickedness of the Devil, and the Sin of Man. These are only Privations of Good, which notwithstanding cause incomprehensible Torments to the Soul of Man. And all that is represented to us by Fire, Hunger, and other Torments of Hell, is nothing in respect of the Pains and Torments which a Soul endures that is deprived of the Grace of God.

For that Soul is not only fallen into the Cold of Ice, and Heat of Fire, but also into all other sort of Torments; because the Privation of the Grace of God, is the Possession of all sort of Evils; and since this Grace brings us all manner of Good, its Privation must needs throw us into all Evil. Now, whatsoever lives in Nature, Generates always, because there is in it a Bent and Inclination to produce its like. Herbs and Plants yield their Seeds and Slips. Nothing remains unfruitful, that lives in Nature. Every Kind produces its like to its Power. Beasts produce after their Kinds. Men produce Humane Creatures; Spirits, Spirits; every one according to their Nature. Good Spirits, which are the Angels of God, do always produce good Spirits: The Evil ones, which are the Devils, do produce evil. And both the one and the other of those Spirits do attempt to produce in the Souls of Men, after their Kind. And whereas Men are the most Noble of all the Creatures, neither Angel nor Devil has Power over him, but in so far as Man gives them. The Good Angels do move Men always to Good:

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Good: The Evil, who are the Devils, to Evil. And this through the Desire that each of those Spirits has to render Men like to themselves. The Devil endeavours to render the Souls of Men Devilish; and the Good Angels to render them Angelical. Man in the mean time remains free to yield himself to be begotten to Good or Evil, for none of these Spirits can force Man, they can only incite him. Every one endeavours to make him of their own Party. But since the Devil corrupted the Nature of Man, he has also more Power over it than the Good Angels, which have not advanc'd it to Good, as the Devil has done to Evil. All the Good in Man comes from God only, and not from an Angel, who being a pure Spirit, has no Power, but over the Spirit of Man, in representing to it Good Things: But the Devil, as a subtil Spirit, has insinuated himself into the Spirit of Man, by means of the Humane Nature.

Now, as the Vital Spirits of Man are in his Blood, dispersed through his whole Body: So the Spirit of the Devil sheds and mingles it self with the Vital Spirits of Man, and works much more upon his Nature, than the Good Angel does; who cannot joyn with the Corruption of this Nature, because he is a Spirit altogether pure; but the Devil is unclean, and agrees well with the uncleanness of our Corrupt Nature. And therefore he is always more united with us than the Good Angel is, who does not delight but in the pure Spirit of Man. For he finds nothing conformable to his Angelical Nature but the Spirit of Man; for our Humane Nature is too gross and earthly to be united with the Angelical Nature.

But the Devil, as an impure Goat, wallows willingly in Flesh and Blood, that he may gain the Soul of Man. He so mingles himself with Man's Blood, that he easily moves all the Parts of his Body to do Evil; but Man knows not that it is the Devil. For he is so united to Corrupt Nature, that tho' we feel his Motions, yet we imagine that they proceed from our own Nature.

The Reason is, Man cannot comprehend how the Devil can thus mingle himself with Flesh and Blood, since he is only a Spirit without Body, as he is truly. But the Devil has the subtilty to joyn himself with the Vital Spirits of Man, that he may move the Flesh to Luxury, Wrath, and other vicious Passions.

You may perceive this, my Son, by your own Experience. For if you mark well the Disposition of your Sentiments,



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timents, you will find that you have been often carried away by vicious Passions, even against your Will; and that you have felt them with regret, which could not proceed from you, for your Will cannot contradict it self. If you had naturally a Will to the Pleasure of the Flesh, it would not displease you; on the contrary, you would take pleasure in it, and be glad that you could effectuate it. But when this Carnal Thought or Desire displeases you, and you regret it, it is a sign that this comes from a Spirit that is without you, and yet is in you, without your knowing how he is there. Yet you see well by the Operations which he does there, that this proceeds not from your own Will, which cannot desire that which is displeasing to it; but it complains with St. Paul, where he says, *The Good that I would, I do not; and the Evil that I would not, that I do.* And this to make us know, that there is in us an Evil Spirit, which is the Devil, who often Acts in us contrary to our Will. Which is but too true, and every one may experience it in himself, provided he will Examine himself narrowly. For tho' the Devil be an Invisible Spirit, yet he renders himself visible by his Operations. Now, since there is no other Evil but the Devil, we must conclude, that all the Evils which we do against our Will, come from him only.

For he endeavours always to make us sin, and to lose the Grace of God, that he may have us Companions in his Miseries, in making us lose all Good, which consists in the Grace of God, to make us fall into all sort of Evil, which is the Privation of all Good. The Devil is in this State, and so he endeavours to beget Wretches like himself; and that with as much Care, Labour, and Desire, as Men bestow to beget their like.

Behold the wretched Instrument, which Acts always in Man, to make him lose the Grace of God. This you must know, my Child, if you would attain to True Vertue. For if the Devil remain unknown to you, he will gain you one way or other. It is all one to him, provided he catch Men; and he has several sorts of Snares, fit for every ones Condition. He spies out the Inclinations of every Man, that he may attack him where he is weakest.

When he sees one enclin'd to covet the Riches of this World, he will give him Prosperity, that his Heart may be wedded to them. If this succeed, he has gained that Man; seeing his Affections cannot be towards God, so long as they are

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are in his Money. Not that the Devil can give Men Riches, for he is but a poor Wretch, who has nothing but Miseries: But he has Power over the Minds of many Men, whom he moves to Labour, and give Profit to such as he hopes to gain by the Bait of Riches. So that he affords Occasions to make them prosper by his Adherents. Now, they who know not the Wiles of the Devil, think it is the Blessing of God when they so prosper. The Devil so blinds their Understanding, that they discover not that even, these Prosperities make them fall into many Sins.

For he that is Rich, becomes ordinarily Proud. He exceeds in Pomp, in Vanity, in Delicious Fare, in Sloth, in Luxury, and divers other Excesses, which he could not commit before he was Rich. So it is easie to conjecture, that it could not be by the Blessing of God that he acquired these Riches.

But Men are now so blind in this Matter, that they ascribe to God that which the Devil does to draw them to Hell; some by one way, and some by another. For he is very subtil, and will beware of Tempting any by things contrary to their Inclination. If he see one Liberal, and that he does not covet Worldly Riches, he will make him exceed in his Liberality; by giving, wasting, and neglecting that which he has need of himself. He will therefore make him give his Riches to those who offend God with that which he gives them. If he see another addicted to Luxury, Blasphemies, and Drunkenness, he is often content with some of these Sins, and lets him do well in other things.

For it is enough to the Devil, if he hold us bound by one only sin, wherein we have plac'd our Affection. This is enough to shut us out of God's Favour, seeing it is not Lawful to withdraw our Heart to place it in any other thing, but in God alone. Yet the Devil always incites Men to do all the Evil he can. But there are many who would not give up themselves to many Vices, tho' they be addicted to some one. Such Persons are not much molested by the Devil's Temptations; but he lets them rest quietly in the Sin to which he sees them most addicted, without tempting them by other things. When the Devil then has no hope to carry Men to greater Evils, he contents himself to keep their Souls bound by one Chain till Death, that he may after drag them along with him into Hell. The Misery is, that Men are not aware of this; for they that are not addicted to many Vices, do still hope for Salvation.

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One will say, It is true, I am inclin'd to Luxury, but I bestow much on the Poor, and will wrong no Man. Another will say, It is true, I am given to Drinking; but I am kind and obliging to my Neighbour. A Third will say, It is true, I love Riches and Honours; but I also attend the Service of God, I go oft to Church, to Solemnities, and Devotions. A Fourth will say, It is true, I am given to Feeding and Delicacy; but I hate no body. And thus with a Thousand Excuses they think to evite Damnation, and to obtain Salvation, while they are not addicted to many Vices or Sins.

But the Devil laughs at all these Excuses. He would have of all sorts of Persons into Hell; to wit, such as have committed many kinds of Sins, and those also that are addicted but to one or two kinds. For in Hell there are all sort of States and Degrees, even as there is in the World; where one is of a higher Quality than another. They who have committed more Sins here, shall be more profoundly damn'd in Hell, than others. I pray God preserve you from this Misery: And I continue

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, the 29 of April,  
1672. St. Vet.*

*Your very affectionate  
in Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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LETTER

## LETTER XIII.

Whatever is sensible to Nature, is not  
the Work of Grace or Vertue.

*To the same. Shewing him a Third Artifice of the Devil, whereby he perswades Men that they may satisfie their Senses in the State of Regeneration, and Praising God. And a Fourth, by which he fixes the Heart upon Spiritual Pleasures and Delights, wherewith the Followers of Vertue are affected.*

*My Dear Child,*

**I** Have not yet sufficiently discovered to you the Subtil Crafts of Satan, tho' I have shewn you how he tempts Men by the Things to which they are most enclin'd. Which I hope you now understand well. But you know not yet, how he tempts Spiritual Persons, and those that seek after true Vertue. He strives more to gain these, than he does for these of the World. For he leaves such to do as they list, knowing well, that to damn themselves, they need but follow their Corrupt Nature, without his Tempting of them much. For the Corruption of Nature comes from the Devil, and we need but follow it to become little Devils; as if we but follow the Light of God, we shall be little Gods. For both the Good and the Evil Spirit do always beget their like, when joyned and united to the Soul of Man.

They produce always Fruits of their own Nature. When Man's Will then joyns with the Corruption of his Nature, there needs no other Devil from without to tempt it, since it has within it self that little Devil of Corruption, which the great one hath engendred there. And when it obeys this Corruption, it obeys the Devil himself. For the Corruption of Nature, and the Wickedness of the Devil, are the same thing, even as a Man's Child is another Man. Men are grossly ignorant in this. They think they are not tempted of the Devil, when they do not feel in themselves preternatural Evils: And they call the Wickedness of their  
Nature,

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Nature, a Frailty; without having ever seriously considered from whence this Natural Wickedness does proceed.

God never created Evil, but he made Man altogether Perfect, and with an Inclination to Good, without knowing any thing of Evil. Therefore of Necessity, the Wickedness and Inclination to Evil, which Man feels in his Nature, must come from the Devil, and even it may be called a Devil, since there is no other Evil but he, as there is no other Good but God. So that they who follow the Inclinations of their Corrupt Nature, walk peaceably to Eternal Damnation. And the Devil does not drive such with the strokes of Temptations, but he observes them at a distance only to see them go on, knowing well, that they will still become worse, if they but follow simply the Inclinations of their Corrupt Nature.

Which few are aware of, but they will find themselves deceived at Death. For during their Life, they think they do no Evil in following their Natural Inclinations; Yea, some say, *God created Nature, and he cannot be offended that we follow it.* This is one of the greatest Temptations, and is a Sentiment that opens a Door to all sorts of Evils.

It is true, God created Nature, and he wills that Man use it; but the Devil has corrupted that Nature. So that Man can no longer use and follow it without Sin, since it is corrupted. Man cannot even do any Natural Function now, without sinning against God; and that as long as he has not overcome the Corruption of his Nature. For if the Natural Man Eat or Drink, he does it with Affection. Now, this Affection ought to be plac'd upon God alone; so he sins, when he turns it elsewhere. And if he place his Affection on Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Feeling, he loves something else than God. But he ought to Love him with all his Heart, and not to set his Affections on any other thing, but on him alone: And so long as Man sets his Heart on Meat, and Drink, and Apparel, and Ease, he is turn'd away from all Good, which is God; and he is joyn'd to all Evil, which is the Privation of all Good. It is the same if we love our Riches, Honours, and Pleasures; for we are turn'd away from God unto the Love of our selves, when we love the Pleasures of the Flesh, and not those of the Spirit. And this exchange of Affection makes us fall into all Evil, since it deprives us of all Good.

If then one would withdraw from all Evil, and possess all Good, he must of Necessity make War against, and overcome

overcome the Inclinations of Corrupt Nature; otherwise he will insensibly fall into all sorts of Sins. For to go to Hell, one needs only follow Corrupt Nature.

Therefore, my Son, you must first die to your self, if you would attain to True Vertue; seeing so long as Corrupt Nature is not entirely mortified in you, you cannot live in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Because for this you must become a New Creature, and detest that Old Corruption which the Devil has thrust into the Works of God: For it is this that is our Enemy, and causes us all sorts of Evil.

Yet the Ignorant think themselves Happy when they can follow their Natural Inclinations, as if it were a Happiness, tho' indeed it is the Source of all Evil. Which you may easily see, by the Reasons which I have brought already. For tho' God created Nature, and ordain'd that it should be sustain'd by Aliments, and also reproduce it self by Generation. Yet he would always have the Heart, and the Affections of Man entirely to himself, without any Partner.

God willingly permits that Man Eat, Drink, Generate, and use his Five Natural Senses, for his Necessity: But it is his Will also that we do not set our Heart, nor our Affections on them, which he requires to be reserved indivisibly for himself alone. We may therefore indeed use all these things, but we ought not to fix our Hearts upon them.

For in the Beginning, when Man was created in Grace, he did Eat, Drink, Generate, and use his Five Natural Senses; because he could do all these things with Thanksgiving to God. When he tasted Good Things, he praised God, who had made them so savoury for him. When he saw Beautiful Things, he praised their Author, in admiring those Beauties. If he smelled good Odours, or heard pleasant Melody, or felt smooth Things, he rejoiced in God, Blessing him, in that he had not only given him the Things necessary for the Entertainment of his Life, but also for Pleasure and Delight. All these things then served Man only to Bless their Creator, and Glorify him in his Creatures. Man then even desired not Generation, but to increase the Praises and Thanksgivings, which they owed unto God.

Behold how Man used all these things aright, before the Devil had corrupted his Nature. But since he is turn'd away from God, to set his Affections on himself, as he does now; he desires not Generation, but for his own Satisfaction,

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Satisfaction, not to encrease the Glory of God, but to wallow in Concupiscence; for they have more Inclination to ~~to~~ enjoy their Fleahly Pleasures, than to produce Children to Glorifie God. And when Men enjoy the Pleasures of their Senses, and so use the Beautiful and Good Creatures, it is more to satisfie themselves, than to bleſs and praise God who gave them. So that they are more wedded to the Gift than to the Giver.

From all this we see, that what served Man for a Blessing, when he was in Grace, serves him now for a Mean of sinning and losing the Grace of his God. Yet we find Men so blinded with Self-love, that they perswade themselves, they may see, hear, smell, taste, and feel, all that is Good and Pleasant, and in the mean while Praise God; which is a Falshood. For since Man's Nature was corrupted, it no longer refers any thing to God; but in all these things pleases its self, and uses them as if it were worthy of them, as it was before Sin. But this is a gross Error: For Corrupt Nature cannot seek the Glory of God; it seeks only its own Glory, and has no Intention to Bleſs and Praise God for what it Possesseth. This Desire of satisfying the Five Natural Senses is common to all those who live according to Corrupt Nature, none excepted.

Therefore they who say that they can use all that is Good and Pleasant, and Praise God in them, do but flatter themselves. For to do this, one must have overcome Corrupt Nature; which they have not yet done, since we see them search after Good and Pleasant things for their own Satisfaction. But if they had overcome Corrupt Nature, they would no longer satisfie it in any thing. For this Corruption is never so mortified in this Life, but it would soon revive, if we grant to Nature its Ease and Pleasures. But the Soul that is regenerated in Jesus Christ, knows well that it must keep its Nature under Subjection and Restraint, during this Short Life, which is a Time of Penitence, where we must Suffer, if we would Enjoy afterwards. Which shews, that they who say *they can enjoy all good and beautiful things here, praising God*, are very Ignorant and deceived by the Devil. For they think they are regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ; which is false, since his Spirit does not teach that we should taste the Pleasures of this Life; and use all that's Good and Pleasant: But he teaches Penitence, and to deny our Selves; to be poor in Spirit; to quit all that we Possess, and to be Sober and



and Watch. All this is not to enjoy whatever is Good and Pleasant. For Jesus Christ teaches to take the least, and to choose the lowest Place. If then these Persons had contracted but never so little of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, they would be far from saying, that they have overcome the Corruption of their Nature, and are regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ; while they do things quite contrary to what he did and taught.

For if it were permitted to the Regenerate to take their Pleasure, and to enjoy whatever is Good and Pleasant in Nature; doubtless Jesus Christ would have done so; since there was never any Person regenerated, and who had overcome the Corruption of Nature, so perfectly as he: And yet he speaks of nothing, but of Suffering, becoming Poor, bearing the Cross, and denying Himself. These inconsiderate Persons must imagine they are more Perfect than he; since they say, that 'tis lawful for them to taste all that is Good and Pleasant in Nature, provided they Thank God.

Nevertheless our Lord deprived himself of all these things, to give us an Example. Do you not see, my Child, that this is a cunning Device of Satan, that he may deceive those who aspire unto Virtue? For he fills their Spirit with Presumption, as soon as he has got them to digest some fine Speculations of the Spiritual Life. They imagine that they are already regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, tho yet they live altogether according to the Corrupt Nature of the Old *Adam*; such Persons are very far from True Virtue; and it is to be fear'd that they will never attain to it, since they think they have reach'd it already: But they are far from it; and better they had never begun to be Vertuous, than to take up with False Vertues. These Sins are worse than others, because of their Hypocrisie. They think themselves Vertuous, and they are yet full of Vices and Sins. I despair more of these seeming-Devout Persons, than of the Men of the World, who have any fear of God; for so they have the beginning of Virtue, which the others have not, for they cannot fear God, when they believe they are regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ; they imagine they have assurance and are secure, and they are in the midst of Perils and Hazards of losing their Souls, by Presumption, and the Delusion of the Devil, who endeavours always to turn aside those that desire to follow True Virtue.

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He First gives them some inward Sweetness and Consolation, that they may fix on it through Self love. For Corrupt Nature loves to be comforted. But the new Beginner no sooner takes Pleasure in these sensible Sweetnesses and Consolations, but he is lost. The Reason is, that he will not mind his Duty to resist the Corruption of his Nature, when he is wedded to these Sensibilities; but will think he has already overcome it, since he feels a Delight and Consolation in Spiritual Things; whereas formerly he felt none, but in Natural Things.

This makes him believe that he is already at the height of Perfection, tho' he has not yet gone up the First Step; which are the Tears of Penitence and Sorrow, for having offended God, and the Desire to walk henceforth in his Fear, which is the Beginning of all Vertue.

But the Devil diverts that Fear, and perswades them *that they are already Vertuous, because they desire to be so.* Thus he amuses those that Begin, and he would willingly entertain them all their Life with Sweetness and Consolations, which the Devil can give, and also Man's own Nature. For they no sooner withdraw from the Vanity of the World, than they find great Quiet; since it is Slavery to serve the World. There they torture and rack their Understanding, with the Cares of maintaining themselves in Reputation and Honour, of being well cloathed, and adorned, followed, and esteemed. What Application must not a Worldly Person have to please Men? What Fear of falling into Disgrace? How must he dissemble and suffer to get Men's Favour and to keep it? How must he toil to gain wherewith to maintain himself Honourably? What Arts and Cunning must he use to get Esteem, and to avoid Contempt? In short, he who serves the World has nothing but Vexation and Disquiet; but he who has resolv'd to quit it, that he may serve God, begins to be loosed from the weighty Yoak of desiring to please the World, and finds himself in much more Quiet and Contentment, which is pleasant to Nature. But if it please it self and rest upon this Sweetness, it will not advance in Vertue; but will live in Self-love, instead of living in the Love of God. And in this the Devil forwards Nature mightily, by encreasing these Sweetnesses and inward Consolations, that the Person may be the more wedded to them.

God also bestows Sweetness and Consolations on those who Begin, to take them off the more easily from Earthly Affections, and to draw them to his Love by sensible Con-

solations,

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solations, which the Soul finds in his Service. But however it be, and whencesoever they come, we must never rest on them, nor take Pleasure in any thing, that is not God. For all Sin came into the World by Man's loving the Creatures, and taking his Pleasure in them. Now when we take Pleasure in inward Consolation, we turn away from God, and love that Sensibility. It is permitted indeed to feel them, since God gives them sometimes: But we cannot addict our selves to them without sinning, no more than to any other thing beside God. For our whole Heart ought to be taken up in the Love of God only.

I know well, the Devil strives to turn us away from this Love, by all sort of Occasions; and he no sooner perceives us to retire from the Love of the World, its Riches, Honours, and Pleasures; but he attacks us by the Love of Vertue, and inward Consolations, that he may thereby withdraw our Hearts from that pure Love of God.

Take good heed then, my Child, that the Devil ensnare you not under a Pretext of Vertue: Which Care she wisheth you, who continues

*In Holstein, near Got-  
torp-Castle, May, 1.  
1672. St. Ver.*

*Your very affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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L E T

# LETTER XIV.

## The Devil transforms himself into an Angel of Light.

*To the same. Discovering to him a Fifth and Sixth Artifice of the Devil, by which he causeth Men to apply themselves to the Knowledge of the Truth, and Mystical, and Spiritual Things; to the end that (Fifth) they may comprehend them; or (Sixth) that they may unreasonably instruct others.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Have not as yet discovered to you all the Wiles and Devices of the Devil; as it is impossible for me to discover them all: But I shall yet tell you more of them, which I have experienc'd my self, and such also as I have seen in others.

You must know then after what manner he deals with Spiritual Persons; otherwise he might seduce you, without your knowing it; and what are the Operations of the Devil, you would sometimes take for the Operations of God. For he transforms himself into an Angel of Light, and does in us almost the same things which the Spirit of God does: He gives Light to our Understanding, and makes it conceive Mystical Things, and deep Divine Mysteries; for he was an Angel of God, and so knew his Will, but did not practice it. He attempts to cause Men to do the very same. He does not hinder them to read Mystical Things, and to take Pleasure in them, seeing these things in themselves are Beautiful and Pleasant. He even makes them curious to desire to understand them, that they may learn to talk finely of them, but he hinders them with all his might from putting them in Practice; for he well knows, how it is written; *that he who knows the will of his Father and does it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes.*

Whereas his Malice is very great; he takes Pleasure to see Man in the greatest Miseries; and the deeper he sees Man precipitated in Damnation, the more he rejoyleth.

For this Reason he incites him always to do more Evil ; and knowing well, that it is a greater Evil to know Mystical Things and not to practice them, than to be ignorant of them, or unable to know them, he gives Light to Man's Understanding to make him understand and comprehend these Divine Things ; and so much the rather, that he reaps his Advantage by it ; for he who understands none of these Things, will be always more humble, than he who understands them well. For this Man boasts and glories without Reason ; whereas the other fears God, because of his Ignorance, and accounts himself unworthy of his Graces, since he cannot speak of Divine Things ; whereas the other, because he can do it, thinks himself a Saint.

I have known several Persons in this State, whom I could not help, because they thought themselves wiser than I, in Mystical Things. Yea, I clearly perceived, that the Devil teaches Mystical Things ; for divers Sorcerers have told me, that the Devil taught them Divine Things, and catechised them even as a Missionary ; and I found that in effect they understood as much of Theology, as some Divines who have studied it all their Life.

I knew in particular one Man, who spoke as Divinely as an Angel from Heaven could do ; and when I heard him at first, I thought I had found another Self, and I remained several Years in this Opinion ; for I had never heard any speak so profoundly of the Inward and Mystical Life, as he ; but at length he discovered to me that all was but Hypocrisie, which I could hardly believe, because of the good Opinion I had conceived of him and of his inward State : So I asked him, where he had learned those profound Secrets of the inward and mystical Life, seeing he had not studied, nor understood Latin ? He answered, That he was ambitious to be esteemed of Men ; and to procure this, he had neither Birth nor Money, being a poor Peasant's Son ; but he observed that Vertue was esteemed amongst Good Men, and Men of Honour, and so he conceived that by learning it he should be in esteem with such Persons, as it fell out he was. For every one esteemed him as if he had been a Saint ; as he had in his Discourse and outward Behaviour, the Appearance of it : He was Modest, walk'd among Men without regarding them : He was always the first at Church on Solemn Days and Times of Devotion : He gave liberally to the Poor, and would sometimes strip himself to cover some wretched Body that he

saw

saw Naked, and this because he had no Wealth to give them Money: He eat and drank Soberly: He was sincere and true in his Words: He profess'd to be in continual Communion with God. And with all these fine seeming Vertues, he was by Compact bound to the Devil, as he himself acknowledged several times at the End of his Life; and died enraged, renouncing God, and calling on the Devils, of whom he complained, because of the Torments which they made him to Suffer.

Behold how Men deceive themselves, in believing those to be Vertuous, who can talk well of Vertue. The Devil himself teaches his Adherents to talk well of it. For this Man told me, that the Devil incited him to buy many good Books, as *Thaulerus, Canstvelt, Johannes de Cruce*, and other good Mystic Authors, that by reading them, and retaining what he read, he might speak like them, and by such Discourses procure the Esteem of being one enlightned by God. Nevertheless this Light came from the Devil; which befalls also many others, who are but Beginners in Vertue, even against their Inclinations, and without their perceiving it: And the Design is, to make them stop at these Lights, and fine Speculations of Divine Things.

Therefore, my Child, never be curious to know much, nor yet to be able to talk well of Vertue; but be desirous to practice well what you know of it: For God will call you to an account of it; seeing to *whom much is given, of him much shall be required*. Be faithful to the first Light that God gives you, and he will give you more afterward. Go not out of your self to communicate it to others, before you have put it in practice.

The Devil makes use also of this Trick, and thereby turns away many from following True Vertue. For he gives them at the Beginning a certain Fervour and Desire to Convert all the World; and this as soon as they have in themselves any sensible Sweetness, or have received some particular Light from God, or have resolved to abandon the World, that they may serve God. They would gladly impart all this to others before they have received sufficiently for themselves; and by this means the Devil distracts their Minds, and makes the little they had to vanish, without any Profit arising to others by it. It is of such Persons the Scripture says, that *they rise too early in the Morning*.

For they cannot give True Vertue to others, while they have it not themselves; and so all goes away in Words and

Distractions, and in the End they remain with empty Souls, from which by little and little is banished all the Tincture they had felt of Vertue. They think to do good to others, and they profit no Body, but spend their Time unprofitably.

Beware of this Deceit, my Child, and go not from within before you be sent. There are enough, who make it their Trade to teach others; but very few who teach themselves. If it come that you have some Grace from God, keep it hid, till it be God's Will that you discover it; otherwise you put your self in Hazard of falling into many Sins, without perceiving it.

For a little of Vain-glory may easily slip into your Heart, when you have received any particular Grace; and even when you have only the Desire of forsaking the World, the better to serve God, this is enough to make you esteem your self more than another. Beware also of publishing it, before you have done it. It is best to do, and be silent; for to speak of these things gives Satisfaction to your Nature, for it is much pleased to speak of good things; so it were better not to give it occasion of Vain Complacency; but to suffer the good Seed which God hath cast into your Soul to spring up secretly, until it bud and send forth Branches outwardly, which spring from the Root within; and that at last it bear Fruit, whereof every one may gather without your Loss or Hurt.

Which will come to pass, when you shall have overcome all Humane Respects, and vanquished Vain-glory. And then shall True Vertue appear sufficiently in all your Works, and there will be no need that you make a Trade to teach others. Then shall your Actions teach them; and Works are much more effectual Sermons than Words. For it falls out often, that they who speak Well, do Evil. This is the Reason also, why Words, tho' Good, work nothing on the Souls of others; unless they know that these Words come from the Heart of him that Pronounces them; then they have more force to work on the Souls of others. But to speak of Divine Things, and of Vertue, without practising them, is as a Trinkling Brass that sounds, or a Parrot that speaks without Reason. And besides the Uselessness of these Words to others, they endanger their own Souls by Vain-glory.



For ignorant People esteem for Vertue vertuous Words, and praise them, as if they were reality; tho' they are not to be esteemed; for the Devil himself can talk very well of Divine Things, as sometimes those have told me, whose Bodies he posselt. I heard a Story, how one time the Devil took the Form of a Humane Body, and a Religious Habit, and in this Equipage came into a Monastery, where there was kept a great Solemnity; and because of the Feast, there was a great concourse of People. Now the Preacher of the Convent had fallen suddenly sick; whereat the Prior was much vexed, having no Person to preach; but at that instant the Devil came in his Religious Habit and knock'd at the Gate; and asked Liberty to lodge in the Convent; and when he presented himself before the Prior to have his Blessing, (as the Religious Strangers usually do) he asked the Reason of his Sadness; who answered it was because of the Sicknes befalLEN the Preacher, who was to preach at that Hour; and that he feared the Murmure and Scandal which this might occasion, because there was no Preacher to supply the want. The Devil replies, that he would preach; which rejoyced the Prior greatly, thinking God had sent him this Preacher in his need. The Devil then mounts the Chair, and preaches so powerfully, and so wisely, of the Judgment of God, of the State of the Blessed, and that of the Damned, that almost all the Hearers wept with Compunction, and were astonished to hear so clear a Deduction of all these Things.

But a simple Religious Person of the Convent, had a Revelation from God, that it was the Devil; whereof he advertised the Prior, who having performed his Offices, caused the Preacher to come before him, and adjured him by God, to tell who he was. He answered, that he was the Devil. The Prior ask'd him, how it was possible that he could preach so excellent Truths, and so profitable for Mens Salvation. To which he answered, *I reap my Advantage thereby; for they who have heard me speak those Truths, can no longer pretend Ignorance. I have declared to them the State of Blessed Souls, and that of the Miserable; as also the just Judgements of God, and they were all moved with them. But they are so wedded to Self-love, and the Love of Earthly Things, that they will not put in practice what I have taught them; but on the contrary, will follow their old Customs, and forget the Truths which I have preached to them.* After this, he vanish'd like Smoak in the

the Presence of the Prior, and some other of the Religious, leaving a noisom Stink behind him.

This Story, my Child, makes appear sufficiently, that the Devil can talk well enough of the Truth; and speak Good Things when he sees he can make his Advantage of them. We ought not therefore to esteem it a Vertue, to be able to talk well of Good Things. Vertue consists only in the practice; do not imagine then that you shall do well to study much that you may speak Advantageously of Vertue; for this would be but a Vanity without Profit.

But endeavour to study well the Knowledge of True Vertue, to the end you may put it in practice; and your practice shall teach others. Never read any thing to learn to talk well; but read the Books which teach the practice of Vertue, as that of *Thomas a Kempis*, or other such like. For high and difficult Questions cannot make you Holy, but may well blow up the Heart with Vanity and Pride.

Now seeing we are obliged to evite even the Shadow of Evil; we must consequently beware of reading unprofitable Things, or Arrogant, Matters of Controversie, and hidden Mysteries; since all these things do only fill our Spirit with Wind, not bringing any Profit to the Soul, but much Hurt. For as a Vessel filled with some Liquor, cannot receive any other thing without mingling with what it has already, ~~it~~, or letting it run out; so is it with our Understanding, when it is replenished with curious Studies of whatsoever Matter. For the Light of the Holy Spirit cannot be shed into it pure. It is mingled with our own Thoughts, and this brings nothing but Confusion; and in this Confusion the Devil fishes, as in troubled Water, and quite dissipates that Light.

This is the Reason why so few Souls do purely receive the Holy Spirit. They are not empty, but filled with fine Speculations, and Mystical Things: Others have their Minds filled with Medicine; others with Astrology; and so of other Sciences. They cannot comprehend why they should not have the Light of the Holy Spirit, as well as some other particular Souls, whom they see and know to possess it. But they need not be astonished, for the Holy Spirit cannot enter into a Soul, that is filled with something else. It must be entirely void of all its own Curiosities, before it can be disposed to receive the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Spirit. It ought not then to desire to know any thing, but what God wills that it should know; and consequently should not apply it self to read any Book, but such as enlightens the Understanding in the Knowledge of True Vertue: Neither must you read these things hastily, or much at a time: You should stop and consider what you find there that's profitable for your Soul.

I would not altogether hinder the Curiosity you have to read my Writings, or those of others, which treat of solid Vertue; for this Curiosity is necessary at the Beginning; for you cannot learn, if you be not curious to know. We must know, before we can love. If therefore you do not know the Truths that I write, you cannot practice them. We must then give way to this Appetite of Curiosity, that you may know good Things. You must not read, to satiate or satisfy; but only that you may learn the Truth. You cannot discover it too much, even tho' some natural Satisfaction mingle with it. This shall not harm you, provided you rest not on that Pleasure.

They say, that *Mary Magdalen* came to Jesus Christ because they told her that he was a Beautiful Man, and spoke well. Nevertheless, this vain Curiosity brought her to the Knowledge of the Truth. But her first Curiosity vanishing, she gave her self to the practice of the Truth which she had heard of him.

Do you the same, my Child. Search curiously the Books which treat of True Vertue, and neglect no Occasion to find them; seeing they serve as means to know the Will of God, and God often speaks to the Soul by the means of a good Book, moving the Heart to the Contempt of things Temporal, and the Love of things Eternal. You must only discern, whether you read Divine Things for your own Satisfaction, or if you do it only to enlighten your Soul in the Knowledge of the Truth of God. If it be for this last, there is no Evil, in giving your self to read much. Stop only at the things which move your Heart to the Love of God, without going farther, till you have found the means to practice it aright.

This I did in my younger Years, when I first saw the New Testament; and when I understood thereby what a Gospel-Life was, I closed the Book for Twenty Years, and exercised my self in the Practice of what is therein contain'd; and so I found the Light of the Holy Spirit, without using Books to instruct me. In which you may imitate me, when you

you have sufficiently read what may make for the Perfection of your Soul. Thus she wisheth you, who remains

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-Castle, the 5th. of May, 1672. St. Vet.*

*Your very affectionate  
in Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

## L E T T E R   X V.

The Devil incites to Good, that he may bring Evil out of it.

*To the same. Discovering to him a Seventh Wile of the Devil, by which he carries us out of our selves; that comparing our Works with those of others, we may from our Vertue contract Vain-glory. And an Eighth, by which he incites us to immoderate Macerations, and Mortifications of the Body. And finally a Ninth, in which he excites us to Immoderation in Spiritual good Works towards our Neighbour, as unseasonably to Instruct, Convert, Reprove, or Correct him.*

*My Dear Child,*

**I** Must discover to you yet another Device of Satan, by which he gains many Persons of good Inclinations, even such as have a good-will, and are not only resolved to labour after the knowledge of True Vertue, but would also put it in practice; for when he cannot amuse them with fine Speculations, and curious Enquiries to fit them to talk well of Spiritual Things, because they have discovered that to talk well of Vertue, and to understand it, is but Vanity, where it is not put in practice, and therefore they had resolved to fall to the practice of it, in the Exercise of good Works.

Then comes he to tempt by Vertue it self, and by the practice of good Works. He endeavours to steal in Vain-glory into True Vertue, and he makes Self-esteem and a Con-

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Contempt of others to slip in secretly among Good Works. No Body is free of this Vanity in the beginning of their Conversion.

For all Men come into the World with an Inclination to Pride; and therefore every one is oblig'd to resist and overcome it, if he would attain to Salvation. Now this Pride is harder to be discovered, when it slips into Vertue, seeing it lurks in the Heart, and does not appear outwardly; as that does which proceeds from abundance of Wealth, and from the Honours which Men give us. For that Pride does sufficiently manifest it self outwardly; for he that is proud of his Riches, will shew to the World his Riches and Liberality; he will even be Prodigal in many things, as in Moveables, Cloaths, Meat and Drink, being desirous in every thing to have the best and the dearest, that he may satisfy his Vain-glory; he would also be honoured and served with Men-Servants and Maid-Servants.

So that his outward Actions do sufficiently discover the Pride of his Heart; but Spiritual Pride hides it self even under the Cloak of Humility. For we see ordinarily that Beginners in Vertue give themselves to Fasting, Watching, Praying, to wear mean Cloaths, to lie on hard Beds, and to other Mortifications of the Body; and they even give themselves to the Exercise of the Works of Mercy both Spiritual and Temporal.

Into which the Devil can easily slip; for if he can gain nothing by Vain-glory in our good Works, because the Man overcomes this by the Grace of God: He attacks us by Excess in these good Works; and moves us to fast to excess, that it may ruine our Health, or unfit us for necessary Labour; and to oblige us afterwards to take substantial and delicate Food, and so make us fall again into Luxury.

Lo how the Devil attempts to make us run from one Extream to another, and especially such as are not well acquainted with Satan's Devices! He has even killed some by excess in Fasting, and Maceration of the Body. I know this is rare, in the time wherein we live, when none will embrace Penitence; and the most love Sensuality. Yet the Devil insinuates himself among the small number of Penitents, and makes them to exceed. For when he can no longer make them fall by the Ease and Sensualities of the Body, he does it by Excess in good Works; and Prayer being the best of all, he makes them tie themselves to a number of Vocal Prayers, to over-charge them, and disquiet them,

*by long string* when

when they have not time to wait and fulfil these ordinary Prayers. Which makes the Man grieved and discontented, thinking he does not please God, when he does not perform all his ordinary Prayers by rote. And in this Thought he is sad and penfive, and uneasie to those with whom he converseth.

Now, the Devil draws his Advantage from Excess in Prayer: For it hurts the Head, when too vehement, and brings often Confusion in their Affairs and Management. I have known Women so addicted to their Prayers and Devotions, that they would neglect their Families to go to Church frequently at Solemnities and Devotions; and withal they thought they did well, not discovering the Cunning of the Devil, who made them Sin instead of Meriting.

For God is a God of Order, and not of Confusion: And he says expressly, *That our Prayers must not be as those of the Pharisees, who use many words, seeing the Lord knows what we have need of, before we ask him.* And if we think to gain time for Prayer by Watching, the Devil will disturb our Spirit, for want of sufficient Sleep, that he may weaken us, and in a short time destroy us.

I have experienced all these things, and have sometimes fallen into so great Extreame, that if God had not miraculously upheld me, I should have been dead long e're now, by Excess in Fasting, and Lying hard. This, God has since shewn me, was but a disorderly Fervour, which cannot last long; and that the Devil thereby takes his Advantage, and easily insinuates therein Thoughts of Vain-glory; for we think our selves better than others, when we use these Mortifications of the Body, tho' they are only means to Mortify our Intemperance and Luxury. For if we were in a right Disposition, we should have no need of Watchings, Fastings, and other Macerations of the Body. It is not the Flesh, but the Will only that can sin, which we ought to compel to do well, rather than our Flesh; for this is only as a Horse, that ought not to be whipp'd, when he rides willingly; which he does as well when he is covered with a Saddle of Leather, as with one of Velvet.

Even so our Heart may be as Vertuous, when the Body is covered with Velvet, as when with Leather; since the outward Habit adds nothing to the Soul. Besides, a simple Habit is often a Cover to Hypocrisie, and makes the Heart Proud. And therefore we must never be wedded to these outward Things, for the Devil thereby finds Opportunity

But

But we must fix upon God only, over whom the Devil has no Power; as he has on all our outward Actions, even the best of them.

For the Devil insinuates himself even into Works of Spiritual Mercy. He perswades us that it is well done to Instruct the Ignorant, and to Admonish the Guilty. Which in effect avails nothing in this Miserable Time, wherein Men perish not through Ignorance, but pure Wickedness. For every Body would set up to Teach Vertue, and very few will practice it.

I exercised my self about Nine Years in Instructing of the Ignorant, without profiting any thing in the Salvation of their Souls. On the contrary, I had the Dissatisfaction to hear some of those, to whom I had shewn the Christian Doctrine and Vertue, say, That now they would do greater Evils than they could do formerly; for they knew now how to cover their Wickedness with feigned Vertues, which formerly they could not do, when they could not talk of Vertue.

So it is not advisable that we distract our selves to go and teach others, unless we evidently see that our Instructions will be Profitable for the Salvation of those whom we desire to Teach. And in this we must use great Discretion, else the Devil would amuse us all the days of our Life in Teaching the Ignorant; making us think we do a Work of Spiritual Mercy, while in the mean time we no ways Profit others, but greatly hurt our selves.

We must indeed have the Charity to Teach our Neighbour; but we ought never to exceed therein, nor have an Indiscreet Zeal for those who seek not after their own Salvation, nor the Perfection of their Souls. For the Devil himself would feign Ignorance, and desire to be Instructed, that he might distract us from our own Perfection. I have known Persons possess'd by the Devil, who continually fought out for Pious Souls, that they might be instructed by them in Christian Perfection. It is such as these whom the Scripture calls, *Silly Women, ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the Truth.* For they Labour not to put in Practice, even tho' they know it; but seek only to amuse us, and cause good Persons to lose their Time; who cannot advance in Vertue, while they labour in vain to procure it to others.

This is the Profit that the Devil draws from these Works of Spiritual Mercy, both of Instructing the Ignorant, and Admonish-



Admonishing those that do amiss: For the Times are become so bad, that the Evil can no longer be resisted, it is enough that we endure and suffer it with regrave. If you should speak, my Child, to Admonish Men of their Oaths, Whoredoms, Robberies, Lyes, and Treacheries, or other gross Sins, they would fly in your Face, curse you, despise you, calumniate, and even hate you. So that instead of doing them a Work of Mercy, you would excite them to greater Sins, and put your self in danger of being abused and persecuted by them, without any Profit. As I have known Persons Zealous for the Glory of God, who could not suffer the Wicked in their Presence; and would Reprove them for their Vices, and Admonish them upon occasions. And those have often run the hazard of being killed by these whom they admonished; and thereby the Devil laboured to extirpate them.

Which also happened to one of my Friends, who was poisoned, for being over-zealous for God's Glory, and too fervent in opposing Evil. We must therefore in all things use Discretion, if we would escape the Snares which the Devil spreads every where to catch Souls. Nevertheless, we must not neglect to Instruct the Ignorant, and to Admonish those that do amiss, when we find Persons disposed to Profit thereby. Yea, we must have in our Heart the Charity of *St. Paul*, who said, That he was willing to be *Anathema*, that his Brethren might be saved. Which looks like an excessive Zeal, but it proceeded from the Charity of his Heart toward his Neighbour, and forgetting of himself. For he regarded more the Glory of God, than his own Salvation or Advantage; seeing he was but one Person only to Glorify God, and his Brethren were many.

So this Excess could not come from the Devil, seeing he had no Interest or Profit by it. He knows that God does the Will of those whom he loves, and so he might foresee that *St. Paul* would obtain the Request which he made for his Brethren. He knew also that God would not damn *St. Paul*, because of the great Charity he had for his Brethren, making an Offering of his own Salvation, that he might save them. For he could take no hold there, since Charity is God himself, on whom the Devil has no Power, but he has indeed over all our outward Actions, when they are done without Discretion.

Therefore *St. Anthony* the Hermit said, *That Discretion is the greatest of all Vertues.* Seeing they are disorderly, when they

they are not accompanied with Discretion: For Fastings, Watchings, Prayers, Works of Mercy, and other Vertues, are not good when Discretion is wanting. It is good to Instruct and Admonish our Neighbour in a fit Season, and when he desires it: But when he does not seek it, or will not suffer it, we must withdraw, testifying that their Imperfections and Sins do displease us, without going to Correct and Restrain them by way of Authority. For God has not given us our Brother in Charge; he is left Free as well as we: So we ought not to help him but by Charity, and that as far as he desires and needs it, and no farther.

God deals thus with all Men. It was his Pleasure to make them Free; so he constrains them to nothing. Now we must not presume to be more Just or Charitable than God, offering to oblige our Neighbour by force to do Good, or to leave off his Sins and Vices; unless he himself entreat us to Counsel and Admonish him, when he fails.

For one Man ought never to go to compel another in what regards his Perfection; since God hath created us Free, and wills not that we be Slaves; but it is his Will that our Souls be his Spouses, that they may voluntarily yield themselves to his Love. Now all sort of Constraint is Slavery; and we must never be so rash as to go to force Man to do well, or to constrain him to leave off his Sins. God will have us Free during the time of our Tryal, which is this short Life. And it is a kind of Pride and Presumption of our selves, when we will go to Teach or Correct our Neighbour by Authority, who is sometimes better in God's sight than we our selves are, though he have not so many Moral Vertues, or outward Appearances of Good. Which we often learn and observe, that we may be agreeable to Men, who do always despise that which is reprehensible before them.

This is the Reason why Politick Persons do easily abstain from gross and outward Sins, that they may appear Good. Which is oft-times a less Vertue, than that of those who speak rudely, and commit Evil openly. The best way is to Teach and Preach to our selves, and to have Pity and Charity for others, when we think they do Evil, and cannot hinder it. For it belongs to Judges and Superiours to repress outward and evil Deeds, that they may preserve good Policy.

But you, who are a Free Person, take not the Charge of others, but Labour to learn well True Vertue, and to put it

in Practice: For the Devil cannot deceive you in this, as he can easily do in the Exercise of External Works of Corporal or Spiritual Mercy. But he insinuates himself more easily in the Bodily, than in the Spiritual, being more sensible and visible, and also more praised and applauded of Men, who esteem nothing more than Liberality.

When therefore they see one *Feed the Hungry, and give Drink to the Thirsty, Cloath the Naked, Lodge Strangers, Visit the Sick, Bury the Dead*, they hold him for a Saint. But it is rare to find such now adays, in the Miserable Age wherein we live. For generally Men are filled only with Avarice and Covetousness, and seek only their own Interests, without regarding the Necessities of their Neighbour. Charity is cold in Mens Hearts, and he is esteemed Vertuous, who gives a little out of his Superfluities to the Poor, or does some other Work of Corporal Mercy.

Now, the Devil does easily insinuate himself into all these things; and if we do not discover his Subtilties, we may do many Works of Corporal Mercy, which shall turn to his Honour. For he who does these things to be esteemed of Men, is a Hypocrite; as the *Pharisees* were, whom Jesus Christ so often upbraided with their Vice. They did truly many Works of Spiritual and Corporal Mercy; but these did not save them. For Jesus Christ despised them, calling them so often Hypocrites, notwithstanding all these Good Works.

And even tho' we did them not to be seen and praised of Men, yet the Devil can find his Advantage therein by the vain Complacency which we take in them within our selves. For it is always more Honourable to give than to receive. And there are some so Naturally given to Liberality, that they would readily give what they have need of themselves, only to satisfy their Natural Inclinations. Others are so given to an Active Life, that they will willingly incommode themselves, that they may Feed the Hungry, Lodge Strangers, Cloath the Naked, Visit the Sick, and Bury the Dead. And this through a Natural Inclination they have to do so.

Therefore, my Child, you ought well to discern the Spirit which moves you to do Works of Mercy, as well Spiritual as Corporal. For the Devil often moves our Hearts to multiply them, and do them to excess, to distract us from inward Exercises, and to hinder us from attaining to True Vertue. And that so we may rest upon the Vertues which Men esteem, such as are the outward Works of Mercy, which

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are generally praised, without discerning them aright. But they may really be Sins, instead of Vertues. Of which you must beware, my Son, that the Devil deceive you not. Of which you are warned by

Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, May 7. 1672.  
St. Vet.

*Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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## LETTER XVI.

That the Devil Corrupts our  
Good Works.

*To the same. Shewing him a Tenth Artifice of the Devil, in our Corporal Good Works toward our Neighbour, which he often brings about to his Honour. Yet we must not therefore cease from them, but joyn Moderation in them, and put away Humane Considerations and Pride, which attack us in this time of Tryal.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Believe it surprizes you, that I said in my last, That Works of Mercy are often done to the Honour of the Devil. Yet this is most true: But for want of thoroughly Considering the Matter, it offends Tender Consciences, and such as by a Natural easiness accounts all Good; they believe blindly that all that is called Good, is so; and that all sort of Good Works are agreeable to God, which is false. For the Devil insinuates himself into our best Actions, that he may render them Evil. And this he has done from the beginning of the World, bringing Evil into all the Works of God, which were all created Good.

This we may find in our selves. For tho' God created Man altogether Good and Perfect, yet we feel that he is now Evil and Imperfect. He was created to Honour God;

and most Men Honour the Devil, and Obey him in every thing, instead of Obeying their Creator. All Men of Understanding, do by the Behaviour of Men now adays, evidently perceive this to be true: Yet they will not believe that Mens Good Works are done to the Honour of the Devil. And thus they shew that they esteem more their own Good Works, than those of God. For Man, tho' created by God altogether Holy and Perfect, serves for the Honour of the Devil. And wherefore will we not believe, that Mens Good Works may serve thereto? Thus those Persons, tho' otherwise Judicious, do here fail grossly.

But it is not strange, seeing the Devil blinds their Understanding, that they may not perceive the truth of things, but may take them according to their Inclinations and Affections. For it is far more pleasant and agreeable to Nature to believe that we do well, than to think that we do ill; and that our Good Works serve for God's honour, and not for the Devil's. For Man feels in himself a Satisfaction when he does well; and he has an Ambition to desire to do what is most estimable. Now it being more honourable to serve God, than the Devil, Men perswade themselves that they serve God; especially when they apply themselves to Works of Mercy. Yet the Devil reaps often the Glory, more than God.

So when also the Devil sees any turn from Sin, and keeps himself from doing Evil, to which he can no longer incline nor engage him; he induces him ordinarily to do many Good Works, to raise in himself Satisfaction and Esteem; and thereby he renders the Good Work, Evil; or he causes the Merciful to be much esteemed and honoured, that he may make them fall into Vain-glory.

The Devil has also the Art to disquiet our Spirit by the care of Works of Mercy, both Spiritual and Temporal; and I my self was exercised with this Temptation. For in my Youth I took care of the poor Sick, I visited them often, I help'd and serv'd them to my Power; and also I assisted all sort of poor and necessitous Persons; I endeavoured to Reconcile those who were at Varlance, and to engage the Slothful to Labour; and in short, I laid these things so much to Heart, that I maintain'd the Cause of all sort of afflicted Persons who ask'd my Help; and I was grieved to send any away without Relief. But I found my self at length so occupied, that my Spirit had no more recollection, and I was so importun'd by these Poor, that I behoved

to abstain from assisting them any longer; and that partly to recover Communion with God, which I had lost by the voluntary Distraction, which the Poor gave me; and partly because I discovered from Day to Day, their Wickedness and Deceits.

For many sought my help, only that they might live at the more ease, and commit the more sins, as in effect they did. I often gave Alms, which the Poor made use of in Drunkenness, Gluttony and Luxury; and they became Idle and Lazy. For when they had not so great necessity to Labour, they neglected to undertake any Work to gain their Bread, because the Alms did afford it them with less Care and Pains.

I found them also Lyars and Deceitful; for they often feigned Necessities, Diseases, or Infirmities, when there was no such thing; and so I saw my help gave them more matter of sinning. They studied to Lye cunningly, that they might get wherewith to live in Idleness. Now when my Design was to do all I could for the Glory of God, and I found that these Works of Mercy, turn'd to that of the Devil, through the inward Indisposition of those I would have helped; it is now impossible for me to do any Work of Mercy, Spiritual, or Corporal, before I know if it shall turn to the Glory of God or not.

For I love far rather to cease, than to do Evil. Not that I fear doing Evil on my part, in assisting my Neighbour on all sort of Occasions, generally and without exception of any. For I know God regards always our Intentions, and sees whether they be upright, and aim at his Glory, or at our own. But my fear is in regard of the Poor, who receive our Assistances unworthily, and employ our Benefits only to the Devil's honour; and it is thus that I understand that Works of Mercy are done to his honour. I know this seem'd strange to you, my Child, but you had not well considered my Reasons.

For if you well examine the State of Men now, you shall find it so Corrupt, that it is impossible any longer to exercise Works of Mercy, without sinning in those to whom they are done. For the most part are Covetous, Unjust, Deceivers, and filled with all manner of Sins; and if we assist and maintain them, we co-operate to their Sins.

Which may be done Nine ways, as I have elsewhere shewn: We may sin in another, to wit, in advising Evil; assisting it; defending it; contributing to it; not hindering

it; not declaring it to them that would hinder it; sharing in it; praising, and flattering it. Now all these ways of sinning are in part committed when we give assistance to the Wicked, whom we know to be such. For if you know that one covets Earthly Goods, and you give him them, you co-operate to this Sin of Covetousness, whether the Person be Poor or Rich. The quantity of the Goods makes nothing as to the Sin, seeing it is committed within the Heart; and it is it which cleaves to this World's Goods, instead of cleaving unto God; and Sin is nothing else but the turning away from God; whether therefore we turn away from him for much Money or for little, this does not diminish the Sin of Concupiscence in the Heart.

It is the same as to a proud Person; for if you give him Goods or Profits, you maintain his Pride, and so you partake of his Sin, which will be laid to your charge: Also if you give to a Glutton, or a Slothful Person, you contribute to all the Sins which he shall commit with your Gifts: You sin also, if knowing a Lyar, Thief, or Unfaithful Person, you praise him, instead of declaring his Wickedness to others; for you render your self Guilty of all the Evils which he shall do, because others are not advertised of his Wickedness; which, were it not dissembled or excused, could not hurt so many Persons, who are deceived, because they are Ignorant of it; and so they yield to him without knowing that they do Evil.

And therefore, my Son, I would advertise you, that you may not let your self be deceived through Ignorance, or for not knowing the subtil Crafts of the Devil. For he makes himself be honoured by them, and brings his own Glory out of the best Actions of Men, when he can no longer draw it from Evil ones. It is all one to him, whether he ensnares us by things Good or Evil: He does as he that would draw one out of the Water; for it is all one to him if he get hold of his Hand or his Arm, he takes hold where he can most easily; and when he cannot draw him so, he draws by his Feet, Head, or Hair, without considering much if he takes him by the one or the other.

The same does the Devil with our Souls, which are in Hazard of drowning in the Raging Sea of this World. God would save them by True Vertue; and the Devil draws contrarywise with all his Might. For when he sees he cannot draw them to himself by Manifest Sins, he draws them by Vertue it self, and by Works of Mercy, which are done for



for the most part to his Honour and Glory, unless we be strictly on our Guard, and discover his Deceits, that we may avoid them. We must then purifie our Intentions, and seek nothing in all our Good Works, but the Glory of God alone; resisting all the Temptations the Devil can lay before us; protesting against Vain-glory, and all Humane Respects. Thus shall we evite all sorts of Excess and Confusions, and proceed always with Discretion to regulate our Good Works.

Behold this is the way to do them not to the honour of the Devil. For I will not say that we should cease from Good Works; we cannot do too many, if we do them with Discretion. But we must take care that the Devil or Sin doth not mingle with them; as it ordinarily happens, because Men are not careful enough that the Devil mingle not with the things that are Good and Holy in themselves. He fail'd not to tempt Jesus Christ during his Fasting in the Desert; tho' nothing could be more Holy nor more Perfect than that Retreat, whither the Spirit of God had led him, that he might entertain himself with his Heavenly Father, free from all Distraction. Besides, nothing was more pure than the Intentions of our Saviour; he says, *he came not into the World to do his own Will, but the Will of him that sent him.* Yet the Devil had the Impudence to go to tempt him several times; as by Vain-glory: *In shewing him the Kingdoms of the World, and also the Stones, that he might turn them into Bread, because of his Hunger.* He tempted him also by the Scripture; saying, *that he might throw himself down from the Pinnacle of the Temple, because it is written, that the Angel shall preserve us.*

Are not these very cunning Subtilties of Satan, while he makes use of the most Holy Things, wherewith to tempt Jesus Christ? He attempts to catch him by his Fasts, his Confidence in God, and by Glory, offering him all the Kingdoms of the World. How then will he not tempt frail and imperfect Creatures, as we are? For what Man is there that must not confess himself to be far short of the least Perfection of Jesus Christ? Who is there that retires to the Desert, to give himself to Conversation with God, out of the Perils and Divertisements of the World? Who refuses the Kingdoms and Riches of the Earth? Who is there amongst Spiritual Persons that does not tempt God by his Temerity and Presumption? For they no sooner receive any particular Light or Grace from God, but they glory in it, and esteem them-

themselves beyond others; and no sooner do they forsake Sin, to give themselves to Works of Mercy, but they think God is obliged to them, and that every body should esteem them; which happens to all that begin to serve God and to follow after True Vertue. I except none, because of the Corruption of our Nature. Whosoever says or believes the contrary; is deceived, and walks not in the Truth, nor in the Knowledge of himself.

For all Men in general, and every one in particular, bring these Natural Inclinations with them, when they come into the World. They are all Proud, Presumptuous, Covetous of Honour, Riches, and Pleasures. They still prefer themselves to others, and esteem themselves worthy of all Goods and Honours. Yea, they think God is obliged to them for the least good Action they do, because the Devil has insinuated into Humane Nature that Pride of Life which blows up the Heart of Man, and keeps him from humbling himself, and acknowledging his Fault.

We see that even *Adam* did not humble himself after his Sin, but endeavoured to excuse it; saying, *The Woman which thou gavest me, tempted me to eat of the Apple*; and she said, *The Serpent beguiled me*. All this proceeded from the Pride which the Devil had already planted in the Hearts of our First Parents, and consequently in the Hearts of all Men that were to proceed from them. For they are all stained with this Sin of Pride, and so will not acknowledge their Faults, but defend them to their Power; which also remains with them till Death, unless they overcome this Corruption of Nature by True Vertue; and when they arrive at that, they overcome the Devil. For he has no Power but over his own Works, or the Corruption which he has caused in our Nature; and it being once overcome, we revive in the strength of the Grace in which *Adam* was created. And when Man finds himself united to God by the love he has to him, then he scorns the Devil, and becomes a New Creature; and so he will no longer have any Fellowship with that Corruption in which he is born.

Yet such a one must be upon his Guard. For the Devil, who seduced our First Parents when they were in the State of Grace, may easily seduce a Man that is Regenerated in it, so long as he lives in his Time of Tryal, which is this Miserable Life. For God will prove Man's Fidelity to him. He created him Free; this Liberty then must needs be proved, otherwise it would be a Constraint. Now, if God would

would have absolutely constrained him to Love him, he would have been Happy, as God's Slave: But he would needs Honour Man much more, in Creating him Free, that he might Entertain himself with him. He would needs then choose the Soul of Man for his Spouse, and not for his Slave. It behoved therefore to have a Time of Tryal, or of Deliberation to resolve; if it would joyn and unite its self Voluntarily to its God or not.

Now this time of Deliberation or Tryal, was this present Life, in which *Adam* should have given Testimony of his Fidelity to his God. Nevertheless he was so Inconsiderate, as to break the Fidelity he owed to the Spouse of his Soul, and go joyn himself to Creatures unworthy of his Love; and so he interrupted the Alliance which God would make with his Soul, even until his Sin and Infidelity were purged by Repentance. This is the Reason why his time of Tryal was changed into that of Penitence, which *Adam* underwent Faithfully all the Time of his Life. But the Ambition which his First Sin has planted in our Hearts, makes us often despise him, and wish Evil to him, because of the Hurt he caused us; as if he were the cause of our Damnation, which is a great Error.

For tho' *Adam* had never sinn'd, yet other Men might have damn'd themselves by their own Sins, during their Time of Tryal. For every one for himself should in this time have given Testimony of his Fidelity to God; since all Men in general, and every one in particular, were of the same Nature and Condition, and also in the same State, with *Adam* before his Sin; and there is at present no other difference between the State of Man now, and that of *Adam*; but that since Sin came, Men are born with an Inclination to Evil; whereas *Adam* was enclined to Good only when he was created.

Set this aside, and we are in the same Condition with *Adam*, and created for the same end; to wit, that our Souls should be the Spouses of God, provided we continue faithful to him during the Time of our Tryal and Penitence, in which we must abide in this Present Life; which is very short in respect of that of *Adam*. Now if we understood well the Truth of these things, and discovered the Snares of the Devil, that we might evite them in our best Actions, we might hope yet to attain to an eternal Union with God. For *Adam's* Sin cannot damn us, if our own Sins do not damn us; seeing God pardoned *Adam's* Sin, in case he fulfilled

filled his Penitence ; and he has also pardoned all other Men upon the same Condition. But the Misery of Men now adays is, that they know not these things ; and that they would Enjoy here instead of Suffering ; which is a false Perswasion of the Devil, who insinuates himself into the most Holy Things, while we perceive it not. This is a Truth which she entreats you to believe, who is careful of your Soul.

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, May 8. 1672.  
St. Vet.*

Anth. Bourignon,

## LETTER XVII.

### Sin proceeds from Man's Free-will.

*To the same. Shewing him an Eleventh sort of Temptation, whereby we lay the Blame of our Sins upon the Devil, to free our Selves ; where is cleared that the Devil cannot draw Man to Sin, nor do him any Hurt, except Man give his Consent.*

*My Dear Son,*

IN my former, I have represented to you, how the Devil tempts Men many ways, and insinuates himself even into Vertue it self, that he may make our Good Works turn to his own Honour and Glory, which very often comes to pass. But I am afraid least he catch you yet by another sort of Temptations ; which you could not discover, if you were not forewarned of it. It consists in this, That when you have well considered the Power and Wiles of the Devil, and found by your own Experience that it is he who incites you to do Evil ; it is to be feared that you will lay the Blame upon the Devil, because sometimes you do Evil against your Will. For the Heart of Man is so proud, that he will not confess his Fault, and therefore seeks for the cause of his Sins without himself. This you will do so much the rather, that I have deduc'd to you at length, that all Evils

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Evils come from the Devil, and all Good from God. But tho' this be most true, we must not therefore imagine that the Devil of himself can ever force us to do Evil. For he is a miserable Impotency, who has no Power over our Souls, Hearts, and Wills; but so much as we give him. The Devil may well represent Evil to our Spirit, and incite our Wills to follow it; he can never force us, so long as our Will remains firmly resolved not to consent to Evil.

The Devil is as a chained Dog, who can go no farther than his Chain permits him; and God will give him no more Power than the Will of Man's desires. For tho' he was permitted to tempt *Job* by the Loss of his Goods, Children, Friends, and Health; yet he never permitted him to make him fall into Sin. And tho' *Job* cursed the Day of his Birth he did not herein offend God, nor fall into Sin: For he cursed only the Malediction that Sin had brought into Humane Nature; which all Men have Reason to do, in feeling the Pains and Sufferings which Sin hath caused to us.

For before Sin, Man was not subject to any Evil; and he enjoyed all Good, without mixture of Evil: He was not annoyed with Hunger or Thirst, Heat or Cold: He had no Labour, and so was not Weary: He had no need of Sleep: He had no alteration in his Body or Soul: He was not subject to Diseases nor Death. So that Man would have enjoyed all sort of Delights in this World; and the Time of Tryal being over, he would have been confirmed in Grace, that he might live Eternally Happy and Blessed.

But Sin has depriv'd him of all this Happiness, and reduc'd him to all sorts of Sufferings and Misery. This *Job* considering in the midst of his Miseries, he had Reason to curse the Hour of his Birth, when he saw himself in unavoidable Miseries. You must consider that *Job* did not curse the Day that God created him; on the contrary he blessed him for all, because he was his Faithful Servant, and so he desired to satisfy the Divine Justice for the Sins which he had committed. Now because he desired it, God permitted the Devil to tempt him several ways, that *Job's* Faithfulness might be manifest before all Men, and the Devil himself.

But they who understand not the Ways of God, judge that *Job* was Impatient; which is false. For his Soul rejoiced, in that God was pleased to make use of him for a Mirrour of Patience, and to confound the Devil; who could never make him fall into Sin, tho' he essayed it by so many

many several ways. God knew that *Job's* Heart was resign'd to his Holy Will, and that he offered himself up continually to him, to be proved in what manner it pleased him; and because of these Wishes, God permitted the Devil to tempt him. Now if the Devil had had Power over Man, he had not needed to ask God's Permission to tempt *Job*; for he would have done it of himself; without any Permission.

But he has no Power over Man, but what Man himself by his own Free-will gives him. Besides, God can never do any Evil to Man, nor permit any to befall him, without the consent of his Free-will. So, if we commit Sin, or are Damned, it is of our own Free-will; for God can never damn any, without doing the greatest Evil that ever was. Which cannot proceed from God, for he can never do any Evil. But it is our Sins that damn us, and not God; for if there were no Sin, there would be no Damnation; and Sin depending on Man's Free-will, we must not attribute our Damnation, either to God, or to the Devil: Seeing God gives us always Grace in abundance to save us; and the Devil has no Power to damn us.

So that Man alone is truly blameable for the Sins that he commits: And we ought never to lay the blame on the Devil, for he cannot hurt us, without our own Consent. He may well bark, as chained Dogs do, but he cannot bite us, unless we come near him.

And therefore, my Son, you ought never to believe that the Devil is the cause of your Evil-doing; tho' all Evil comes from him, he cannot work it in us, without our Consent. He may indeed Afflict our Body, or our Spirit, when we desire to have our Souls purged by Sufferings.

Then God permits him to Tempt us, by things that will be most for our Salvation. As he will permit the Devil to bring Poverty on a good Man, when he sees that this World's Goods would make him forget himself. God loving his Soul, takes his Riches from him, as the occasions of his Damnation. Sometimes also he deprives him of Honour, or Health, lest these things should hinder the Perfection of his Soul. And it is not always the express Will of Man that these things should be taken from him, for he complains sometimes of it; but when God takes them, it is always with Man's Will indirectly.

For Example: A Person desires not to be Poor, or Afflicted, or Sick, but he desires that God may send him every thing  
that

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that is necessary for his Salvation : And God regarding this Good-will, removes from him whatever may hinder him in the advancement of the Salvation he desires. And this is a Fatherly Love which God bears to Man, and not a Punishment, as the Natural Sense takes it, and complains of it; but it is truly what the Person desired in the bottom of his Soul; to wit, things that were for his Salvation. And even the Prophet begs of God, *That he would constrain his rebellious Will.* By which we may see that God never Afflicts any, without their own Will and Consent directly or indirectly.

Because he created Man altogether Free, he cannot be compelled either to Good or Evil : Neither by God, nor by the Devil, who can never cause Man to sin against his Will expressly or indirectly. But Men do not always know the indirect Will that they have to do Evil, and therefore they say or imagine that it is the Devil that makes them sin against their own Will. But this is only an Excuse for their Sins.

It is true, the Devil can indeed Tempt Man against his Will, but he cannot make him Sin against his Will. He may disorder his Spirit, and make him remember what he ought to forget; and forget what he ought to remember : But if the Person be well upon his Guard, and will not do Evil, he will easily discover, that this comes from the Devil, being against his own Will; and will have recourse to God by continual Prayer, which Jesus Christ has so much recommended to us, as most necessary for our Salvation. Since we have continually an Enemy to fight against, we have need of Arms continually to defend our selves; and this will be necessary all the days of our Life.

Thus the Apostle advises us, *To Pray always without ceasing*; because we have always need of God's Help against the continual Assaults which the Devil gives us. For it is his Business and Imploy to do us as much Evil as he can. And as a Merchant accounts himself Happy to gain much Money by his Traffick, or a Tradesman by his Labours; so the Devil thinks himself Happy in gaining many Souls to himself, that he may exercise on them his Cruelty and Malice. And therefore he never ceases, for his part, to Labour and Invent new Snares to catch the Soul of Man. And when we shut the Door of our Heart against him on one side, he attempts to enter by some Window on the other.



So that all Humane Wisdom together is not able to discover all the Subtilties of the Devil, who being a most subtle Spirit, surpasses in Subtilty the Capacity of Man's Spirit.

He must therefore of absolute necessity use continual Prayer, that he may discover the Temptations of the Devil, which he cannot know without a Divine Light; and far less is he able to withstand them, without God's Assistance; whom he ought continually to invoke, and call upon for Help, without intermission; seeing the Devil never sleeps, and watches for us when we sleep. But the strength of Faith, and hope in God, can make us overcome the Devil, and despise him, as being but Miserable Impotence. Seeing he can never make us fall into any Sins, without the consent of our own Will, which if it be not yielded to him, he can in no wise hurt Man, tho' he should tempt him with all his might, during his whole Life.

These Temptations serve only for greater and more real Vertues to Man, because he passes the time of his Tryal in Testifying his Faithfulness to God, while he does not consent to the Tentations which the Devil sets before him.

And I reckon it a much happier State, to be tempted, than not to be so, when we resist the Temptations; seeing they purge our Souls, and satisfy the Justice of God, who has in Justice enjoyed us Penitence for our Sins, which of necessity we must accomplish during the time of our Tryal, which God has limited since the Creation of Men.

And if we will not voluntarily suffer the Temptations of the Devil now, we must suffer far more sensible Pains after Death, when the Soul being separated from this Mortal Body, has a more lively feeling of its separation from its God, than it has when shut up in this Mortal Body, which diverts the sense of this Separation, by its Five Natural Senses, which Seeing, Hearing, Touching, Smelling, and Tasting, Gross and Earthly Things, are in Suspension and Amusement, so as not to feel so lively the Separation of the Soul from God, and so it Charms our greatest Misery, with the Amusement of Earthly Things.

Which are nothing but real Charms and Bewitchings. For tho' we see by daily Experience, that never any Person in the World was fully satisfied and content with Earthly Things, tho' enjoying them at their wish; yet we love them, and this Love robs us of the Love of God, and yet we feel not the pain of it,

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But after Death all these Gross and Earthly Things being at an end as to us, then shall we lively feel the Absence of God, being no longer diverted with any other thing. And this shall endure until our time of Tryal be past, which how long it shall continue, God only knows.

But it is most certain that he who will not voluntarily endure in this Mortal Life the Temptations of the Devil, shall assuredly suffer them more sensibly after Death; seeing no Evil shall remain unpunished, and no Good without a recompence. And he who does the Good of Resisting the Devil, in not following his Temptations, may look for an Eternal Reward.

And therefore I think, that not to be tempted in this Mortal Life, is the greatest Temptation of all. Since it deprives us of the Good of Satisfying the Justice of God, and obliges us to suffer afterwards more sensible Torments.

Therefore, my Son, be not grieved that you feel the Temptations of the Devil, but resist them valiantly, for the Glory is in the Combat, and not in Idleness or Rest; seeing while we feel no Temptation, it is a sign that the Devil keeps us in a Lethargick Sleep, to make us die an Eternal Death insensibly, and without pain. But when he fights against us with all his might, it is a sign that he has no hold of us, and that he is afraid to lose us.

Therefore take good Courage, and pray to God in Humility of Heart, that he may give you Strength to overcome this Enemy. But never say, that it is the Devil that makes you do Evil; but smite on your Breast, and confess your Guilt; since the Devil cannot constrain you to do Evil, but only your Perverse Will, when it consents to his Temptations.

For if the Devil could speak, when you say, it is he that has made you sin, he would give you the Lye, and say, that it was not he that made you sin, but your own Will, without the consent of which you cannot sin.

You may indeed sin without the Devil, for his Wickedness has entred into us by *Adam's* first Sin; but the Devil cannot sin in us, without our own Consent. You are always free to do Evil, tho' the Devil do not tempt or compel you; because your Nature was corrupted by the First Sin. And hence all Men, from *Adam*, bring with them, when they are born, this Corruption and Inclination to Evil.

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But when Man is arrived at the use of Reason, he ought thereby to discern Good from Evil, and choose which he will follow. Yea, he has even a Natural Instinct which makes him discern Evil from Good; for we often see that a Child, who has no Judgment, is ashamed for having done Evil, and his Countenance testifies sufficiently that he knows when he does Evil. Therefore we ought never to believe that we cannot discern Good from Evil, that we may choose it, for that is but to flatter our selves.

Seeing the wickedest Man in the World, however blinded in his Sins, knows assuredly well enough when he does Evil; but he has no will to change his Wickedness into Good, or he has not Courage enough to resist the Devil, and that because he has given him so much Power over his Spirit. Otherwise Man has in him a good Judgment, beyond any other Creature; and by this Judgment he can assuredly discern and know Good from Evil; and he is free to choose the Good, and hate the Evil, by an absolute Act of his Will, which the Devil cannot hinder. And moreover, he has Power to resist the Devil by Faith and Hope in God, who never fails to succour a Man who asks and desires it.

Therefore, my Son, you must never say, that the Devil made you do any Evil: Otherwise this were to make you his Slave, and to declare that you will be subject to him; as Sorcerers are, who have given him their Souls, and promised to obey him. For such have really obliged themselves to do all the Evil he pleases; and when they do it not, he beats and abuses them.

But you being a Child of God, and Voluntarily subjected unto him, must not fear that the Devil can make you sin against your Will; and so never impute to him the fault that you commit your self. It is true indeed, the Devil first incites good Men to do Evil, but they should despise him, and not follow him; yea, and mock at his Temptations. But we must still watch against his Surprizes, and never sleep in the way of True Vertue: Believe then the Apostle's Counsel, where he says, *My Brethren, be sober and watchful*; and for this very Reason, *because the Devil still goes about like a roaring Lion, seeking to devour us*. We must resist him courageously, and not say, I was not thinking on the Devil, when I did Evil. For he is well pleased that we do Evil without thinking on him. This is his greatest Delight. For it cannot fall out that Good Men do Evil, but while they sleep, and do not think on Evil: Then is it that

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the Devil Acts most in us, and keeps us from thinking on it, till the Evil be committed.

But our Negligence or Sleepiness will find no Excuse before God, seeing we are obliged to Watch always, if we would arrive at True Vertue. To which, she exhorts you, who cares for your Soul,

Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, May 13. 1672.  
St. Ver.

*Your very Affectionate  
in Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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L E T T E R XVIII.

The Good and Evil Spirits are known  
by their Fruit.

*To the same. Giving the Signs to know whether it is the Good or Evil Spirit that moves us. Shewing also a Twelfth Artifice of the Devil, by which he causes us to impute our Vices to our Natural Propensions, without suspecting him to lurk therein, that he may remain unknown.*

*My Son,*

I See yet one Difficulty which occurs to your Spirit; to wit, How you shall discover when the Devil insinuates himself into your Good Actions; and how you shall know that it is he that moves you to do Good, that he may catch you, or make what you shall do with a good Intention, turn to his Honour and Glory. For you protest, that you will not obey him, nor follow his Temptations in any thing, when you shall discover and know that he tempts you.

Believe me, my Son, it is very easie to discern this, provided you have an absolute Will to resist the Devil. It is very good, and most easie to discern if it be the Good or Evil Spirit, that moves us in all our Actions and Words, to do or say any thing, small or great; because these two Spirits have

have quite contrary Qualities and Dispositions, and do also work in us quite contrary Dispositions. So that you may as it were feel with your Finger, if it be a Good or Evil Spirit that moves you to do or say any thing, by the Dispositions which you shall feel in your Soul.

For the Good Spirit produces in our Souls Charity, Joy, Peace, Patience, Long-suffering, Goodness, Benignity, Meekness, Chastity, Faith, Continnence, and Modesty. And on the contrary, the Evil Spirit produces there Self-love, Sadness, Trouble, Impatience, Rashness, Wickedness, Fretting, Pride, Despair, Intemperance, Inequality, Inconstancy, and Impurity; which are all Things contrary to the Fruits of the Good Spirit. And as the Tree is known by its Fruit, so we may discover the Evil Spirit by the Fruits which he produces in our Souls. And therefore we must always examine, if our Enterprizes or the Resolutions we have to do or leave undone any thing, produce in our Souls Charity, Joy, Peace, &c. and then we may be assured, that our Undertakings and Resolutions are of God, seeing they bring us the Fruits of his Spirit,

But if on the contrary we feel in our Souls Self-love, Sadness, Impatience, &c. we may be well assured, that our Desires and Enterprizes are excited by the Devil. This is a firm and sure Rule; we need not then amuse our selves with fine Speculations, to discover if we are moved by the Devil to do or leave undone any thing, while we feel in our selves the Effects of a Good, or of an Evil Spirit. For the Devil will never incite to Charity, seeing it is a Divine Quality, which the Devil has not in his Power, and which unites Souls to God; but he draws all manner of Advantage from Self-love, and turns away the Soul from the Love of God.

For he who loves himself; covets Pleasures, Honours, and Riches, and all that is not God; and so he is Sad, and is not in a State to acquire True Vertue, for he has not Courage to resist the Temptation of the Devil, but suffers himself rather to be overcome by dark Melancholly Thoughts. But the Good Spirit banishes these Thoughts by the Joy which it brings into the Soul, and tho' there were all sorts of Occasions of Sadness outwardly, even for our Sins; this Good Spirit comforts and rejoices the bottom of the Soul amidst the most sensible Troubles and Pains: When therefore we have inward Joy in the midst of Sufferings, it is an assured Testimony that the Holy Spirit dwells in us; which hath  
made

made me often rejoice in the midst of Sufferings and Persecutions. I have therein sometimes felt a great Joy in the bottom of my Soul, in bewailing my Sins; and I thanked God that he gave me these Tears of Penitence.

But the Devil gives only seeming and outward Joys, which afflict and grieve the Heart as soon as they are over; this is the Reason why we see worldly Persons still seek for new Divertisements. For the one is no sooner gone, but Melancholly seizes the Heart of him, who would divert himself, and therefore he hunts insatiably after new Divertisements, yet without finding True Contentment; which we cannot have but by the Joy of the Holy Spirit, and that Joy is not to be found among the Divertisements of the World.

I was astonish'd to hear one Day of a Person, who pretended to re-establish *Israel*, that he search'd for a great House with a Garden, there to walk and divert himself; as also that he must sometimes walk in the Field, or go by Water in a Boat, to divert himself; which made me sufficiently perceive that the Holy Spirit had not yet produc'd his Fruits in his Soul, tho' he was esteem'd a Saint. For then he should not have needed Humane Divertisements to make him Joyful.

As for me, I know by Experience that I have more Joy and Contentment in my Soul, in Solitude, and far from Humane Divertisements, than I have in Mens Conversation, or amidst the most diverting Objects: Which gives me Assurance, that my Joy comes from the Holy Spirit; it cannot proceed from Humane Means; for it would be my Consolation never to go out of my Closet, and to understand nothing without my own Heart and inner Man.

But the Joy that proceeds from the Evil Spirit terminates and ends always in Sadness and Melancholly; with a thirsting for new Divertisements, to divert this Sadness: So that it is very easie to discover, if it be the Good or Evil Spirit, which dwells in our Souls, by the Dispositions and Operations which we feel in them.

When therefore we desire to do or say any thing, we need not so much apply our selves to consider if it be in appearance good or indifferent, that we may know if it comes from God; as to examine the Disposition, which that Desire brings into our Soul; to wit, if it be in Peace, and if it wait for the effect of its Desires, with Patience and Long suffering. For this is a sign that the Spirit of God has given us that

Desire, and that it is his Will that we bring it to effect. But if we perceive that this Desire to do or say any thing mairs our Peace, and disturbs our Spirit with Impatience, and strives to precipitate us before the time of fulfilling our Desires; it is a sign that this comes from an Evil Spirit: And if the Thing or the Desire be good in it self, it is a sign that the Devil would insinuate himself into this Good Work, that he may draw Glory to himself from it. However, we must not cease to do or say what is Good in it self; but we must be on our guard, that we suffer not the Devil to insinuate himself in it; we must then use continual Prayer for God's Help, and Strength to overcome the Temptation that the Devil gives us, while we are doing Good.

We must never cease from doing Good Works, because of the Temptations of the Devil; for he would be well pleas'd still to hinder them, if he could. But we must examine well the inward Disposition of our Souls, to discover if the Devil does not insinuate himself therein, that we may always purifie our Intentions, and hinder the Devil from getting any Advantage by them. And if you would know, my Son, when it is that God inspires you with any thing; remark always if it be accompanied with Goodness, Benignity, Faith, Continnence, and Chastity; for God never gives any Inspiration which is not accompanied with these Qualities: But the Devil gives often Inclinations to do Good, with Fretting, Malice, Despite, Despair, Inconstancy, Levity, and Impurity.

I have seen sometimes Persons that gave to the Poor with Despite and Fretting, Upbraiding and Reproaching, them, without the Faith of an Eternal Reward. I have seen others assist at the Publick Worship with Levity and Insolence; and now adays almost all marry by Incontinence and Impurity. All these things, tho' good in themselves, are induced and excited by the Evil Spirit; seeing they tend to an Evil End, tho' they be good in Appearance.

And therefore we must alway be upon our Guard, and Watch against so powerful an Enemy, who attempts to surprize us in all our Actions, both Good and Indifferent, that he may render them all Evil. Therefore we must study well to discern the Good Spirit from the Evil; which we may do, seeing there are sure Marks whereby to know them. Never say then, my Son, that you know not if it is God or the Devil who moves you to do or omit any thing; but rather acknowledge with Humility of Heart,  
that



that you are not Vigilant and Diligent enough to discover that Evil Spirit, who blinds your Understanding that you may not know him.

For you never speak a Word, nor do an Action, wherein you may not discern whether it comes of God, or of the Devil, provided you reflect seriously upon your self. But the Misery is, that we are distracted and strayed from our selves; and the Devil makes us forget what we ought to remember, and puts in our Mind that which we ought to forget, that he may bring Confusion in all our Behaviour.

Remark well this Advertisement and you will find by Experience, that it is but too well grounded. For since the Devil can no longer make you fall into manifest Sins, he will always endeavour to make you contradict the Spirit of God, which you do not yet well know. You have indeed resolved in the general to obey and follow him, as you have done in abandoning the World, in losing your Affections from Earthly Goods, and desiring to follow Jesus Christ in his Lowliness and Humility. All this proceeds from the Spirit of God, who has govern'd you in the most Important things, and the Devil could not hinder it.

But now he attacks you in small things and things of little Importance, that he may hinder you to do the Will of God in every thing, and often he gains your Will to make it contrary to the Will of God in common and ordinary things. For if you reflect upon your self, you shall find there a certain Opposition to whatever I propose to you; which come often even against your Will, yea, you are troubled that you have so opposed or contradicted me. Yet on the First Occasion, you do it again. This cannot proceed from your self, since you are displeas'd at it. Now it is as a firm and true Rule, that whatever Evil we do against our own Will, comes of the Devil and not of our selves.

I know that this Spirit of Contradiction which you have against what I desire, comes not of your own Will. For you would gladly obey me in every thing, seeing you know that I never desire any Evil. But in effect you cannot obey me in things Good and Saving. This comes assuredly of the Devil, who is a Spirit directly contrary to the Spirit of God who governs me. For he stirs as soon as I speak, and brings some Contradiction or Opposition to what I Propose; Lo, he is troubled, enraged, and firs, and would raise among us Thunder and Lightning, as Heat and Cold do, when they meet in the Air; which you often do, and

know not how to help it; because you have not sufficiently discovered, that it is the Devil that does this in you against your own Will.

For you alledge some times Reasons, as if you would maintain his Quarrel; and let me know that you have reason to contradict me: Which you could not do, if you believed that I have the Spirit of God, from whom no Evil can proceed. But the Devil makes you forget this, and raises in you a Spirit of Contradiction; to which your Nature is also inclin'd. This is the Reason that you do not sufficiently discover that it is the Devil; and that you impute it to your Natural Inclinations; which yet is not so, tho' it mingle it self with the Inclination of the Devil. It is his custom, to follow every ones Natural Inclination, to cover himself the better, that he be not known.

And by this Device, he remains unknown, every one attributing his Fault to his Nature. One would be born in his Anger, another in his Sadness and Moroseness, and another in his Lust; saying often, I cannot help these things, for it is my Nature.

This is a Language that the Devil hears gladly, because thereby he lurks unknown, and makes us go from Evil to worse, even unto Death. But they who esteem'd the Malice and Wickedness of the Devil, to be but Natural Infirmities and Weaknesses, shall perceive clearly at Death, that it was the Wickedness of the Devil which mingled it self with every ones Inclinations. Now the Devil labours always to discover these Inclinations, that he may play his Game the better, and may remain unknown under this Cover of Natural Infirmities.

And thus he amuses many. They never think it is the Devil, because he is so straitly united to their Natural Inclinations; and this is his Subtilty. He knows well, that he would not be so much obeyed, if he gave Temptations contrary to ones Natural Inclinations; and therefore he always follows every ones Temper, and encreases the Inclinations that he finds in their Nature. If he meet with a Cholerick Person, he stirs him up the more to Anger; if with a Lustful or Melancholly, he encreases their Luxury or Sadness; that he may gain them all by their weak side. He does as an Enemy, that would attack a City; he will not assault it where it is fortified, but where it is weakest; if he find some corner of the Wall broken, he endeavours to break it more, that by it he may enter the Town, being the most advantageous Entry for him.

Tj he

The Devil, our sworn Enemy, does the very same; he cannot surprize us in things wherein we are upon our Guard, and therefore he attacks us where we do not expect him; and by this means he easily gains our Will, and makes it obey him in what we have an Inclination for.

We must therefore always reflect seriously upon all our Words and Actions, and then we shall easily discover what comes from the Devil; seeing it has always his Qualities, and produces within us the Fruits of Envy, Trouble, Impatience, Sadness, and the other things which I marked above. You may also remark sufficiently the Qualities of the things which the Devil makes us do. For if you will examine your self narrowly, you will always find in your Words something untrue or dissembled, or spoken out of vain Complaisance to please Men; which makes that there is not always Justice in your Words. For he that speaks by the Good Spirit, is true at the bottom, and never speaks any thing to please or flatter Men; but declares the Truth of things, as well what is contrary to himself, as for his Advantage; seeing he seeks only to please God alone.

To know if our Actions be excited by the Devil or not, you need but mark if they be done for God's Glory, or for your own, and if you seek not your self therein. For the Devil will always stir us up to seek our selves in all that we do. He knows well that Self-love hinders the Love of God, and so he excites our Understanding to consider, if what we do or say will be for our Advantage, if it shall give us Pleasure, Honour, or Profit; and when we observe none of these Advantages in it, he slackens our Courage, that we may not accomplish our Undertaking, nor prosecute our Work.

The Good Spirit on the contrary incites always to labour for the Glory of God, and the Assistance of our Neighbour; and so he that is guided thereby does nothing for his own Interest, but endeavours to his Power to assist his Neighbour in his Need; because Charity, which that Good Spirit brings along with it, watches more for the common than for its own particular Good.

By this, my Son, you may examine all your Words and Actions, to know if they are excited by the Good or Evil Spirit. For these are infallible Marks whereby to discern Spirits, whether they come from God, or from the Devil, without amusing your self to speculate or seek to discover the Devil in himself, since he is an invisible Spirit, and

Incomprehensible to your Understanding; but you shall always assuredly discover him by his Qualities, and by the Fruits which he produces in your Soul, and which your inward Disposition will tell you. This she assures you of, who is

*In Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, the 15th. of May,  
1672. St. Ver.*

*Your very Affectionate  
in Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

## L E T T E R XIX.

We cannot in this Life be free from  
Tentations.

*To the same. Who was grieved, for that the Devil hath Power to tempt us so variously. A Thirteenth Artifice of the Devil is shewn him, wherein he breaks the Firmness of the Mind by Sadness. That Tentations are Necessary and Profitable to try and purifie us.*

*My Dear Son,*

**I** See you are grieved, because the Devil has Power to tempt Men so many divers ways; but you ought to rejoyce while you learn the Truth of every thing; for if you knew it not, the Devil would seduce you by Ignorance, as he has done so many Thousands, who have obeyed him, because they did not know it. They thought to do the Will of God, and they certainly did that of the Devil, and so have perished insensibly.

For before God, Ignorance does not excuse Sin; every one is obliged to know what he ought to do and avoid, that he may attain to Salvation: We need not think to say to God after Death, Lord, I knew not this or that, or, I thought not that I did Evil in this; for all Excuses will be like uncurrent Coyne, which will not be received nor approved of him; seeing we have abundantly the means to find, if we have the desire to seek.

What would we say, if we saw a Man Poor and Miserable, or oppressed with his Enemies, and who yet would not be

be at the Pains to labour or seek some other Means for his Living, and would needs sleep and rest at his Ease, tho' he knew himself to be surrounded by his Enemies? We would certainly say, this Man is the cause of his own Misery, and of all the Evils that may befall him.

And why do you not likewise conclude, that he who neglects to search for the means of his Salvation, and to discover the Wiles of the Devil his Enemy, is the cause of his own Damnation? For it can only be imputed to our selves, seeing we have abundantly the means to find, if we had a real desire to search. Tell me, I pray you, what cause of Ignorance can a Christian pretend, who reads and hears the Gospel, and the Instructions of Jesus Christ and his Apostles? To which he gives credit, and he grants that they teach, that there is a *Devil who is our Enemy, and who seeks to devour us; That our Life is a continual Warfare; That we must fast and watch, that we enter not into Temptation.* Nevertheless, Men will neither do the one nor the other, but live in ease, without resolving to fight, they continue secure amidst the danger of their Enemies.

And which is strange, when any would awaken them out of this Lethargick Sleep, they are grieved and dissatisfied. Nevertheless this Sleep will assuredly procure them Eternal Death, if they do not awaken to fight their Enemies; we cannot hinder these Enemies from watching us as Spies on every side. But they are unwilling to be discovered, because an Enemy discovered is half vanquish'd.

And therefore, my Child, you ought to rejoyce, rather than be sorrowful, that God permits that I now discover unto you so many of the Wiles of the Devil. For you cannot make him not to be Wicked, and that all manner of Malice proceed not from him, no more than you can hinder him from tempting Men, since our First Parents gave him that Power; and tho' they had not done it, we give him daily the same Power over us, which he got over them, by the consent of our Will to his Tentations.

This being so, we must fight, or render our selves to him, which were lamentable; for we were created true Children of God, after his Image and Likeness; and we should become by our Sloth the Children of the Devil. This you must never suffer; but endeavour to discover the Evil, and resist it to your Power; and bless God also, that he sends you his Light, that you may know it, and beware of it; without afflicting your self so much because of the Power the Devil has to tempt Men.

For

For Temptations purifie the Soul, and render it agreeable to God. He takes pleasure to see us fight his and our Enemies; and he gives us strength and aid, if we persevere constantly. Moreover, he prepares us Triumphant Laurels, and Eternal Rewards for the Victory. Therefore you must not give place to that feebleness of Spirit, to languish, because the Devil has Power to tempt Men, since it is not in you to take it from him; he has too long possessed it.

For since he made himself the Enemy of God, he has had Power to do in himself all the Evil he pleases; tho' his Evil cannot hurt Man, unless he consent to it. For Man has full liberty to resist him; as the Devil has full liberty to tempt us. If this were not true, the Devil would never had the Power to tempt *Adam* our First Father, who was altogether Holy and Perfect at his Creation, and had not in his Beginning given any occasion to the Devil to tempt him.

But the Devil being created free, as well as Man, he had Power to do all the Evil he pleas'd in himself. For he would even be Equal with God, which is a greater Evil than to tempt *Adam* in his State of Innocence: And that of tempting Men now is yet far less, seeing they are corrupted by the First Sin; and it is yet less, when he tempts those who have so often consented to him with a deliberate Will.

And therefore, my Son, you have no ground to fret because the Devil has Power to tempt you; but you ought truly to regrave, that by your past Sins you have given him so much Power over your Soul. Resolve now to war against him with manly Courage, and hinder him from getting any more Power over your Soul by resisting his Temptations. For this is a holy and saving Resolution.

But the Grief which you conceive, because the Devil has Power to tempt you and others, comes from him. He makes us always desire things Impossible, and such as are not in our Power, that he may afflict and discourage us. For he knows well, that a grieved and discouraged Person is not well fitted to resist his Temptations; and that he can easily lead one in this State from one Evil to another. And therefore he often causes vain Grievings, such as that which proceeds from this, that the Devil has so much Power to tempt Men; and also the disturbing Grief for our past Sins, which are no longer in our Power.

These

These are the Extremities into which the Devil attempts always to make us fall. It is true we ought to regrave that we have voluntarily given the Devil so much Power to tempt us; and we ought yet more to lament our by past Sins; but we must not therefore rest in these Grievs, seeing they would hinder the Graces of God in us. It is better to go to God by Love and Amendment of Life, than by Melancholies, which proceed from the Devil; since before him, there was nothing but Joy in the World and in the Heart of Man.

So that Sadness is truly a Quality of the Devil; and therefore Man ought to despise it, if he seek after True Vertue.

He ought indeed to have a sincere Regrave in his Heart for having offended God, and beg Pardon of him as often as he remembers his Sins; but he ought never to suffer himself to be overcome of Grief, since what is past is not in his Power; and tho' he should destroy himself, he can never make that what is past should not be.

He ought then, for Penitence for his by past Sins, to endeavour a true Conversion unto God, departing from Evil to do Good, detesting Sin to embrace True Vertue: Which is a true Contrition much more solid than Tears and immoderate Grief, which the Devil ordinarily gives them that Begin.

This you must beware of, my Child, for God would be served with a joyful Heart; and he says, *That he deals with the Converted Sinner, as if he had never offended him.* You should rejoyce then for the Grace God has given you to forsake the World, and to turn from Vanity to the Truth of Things, which you now discover; and do not afflict your self because the Devil has Power to tempt Men, since this Power cannot be exercised but on those who give him or have given him their full Consent; and that all things turn to Good to them that fear God. When the Devil tempts you, remember that he cannot hurt you without your own Consent; and your resisting his Temptation renders you agreeable to God. For your Soul must be tryed, as Gold in the Furnace, which is still the more purified by continuing in the Fire. Even so is a Soul purified by long Temptation, if it remain firm in resisting; and nothing can hurt it, but Sin, from which if it do abstain, it gets the Victory over its Enemies; and all that they can do against it, are nothing but false Alarms, which try its Fidelity and Vigilance.

And



And therefore we must not desire that the Devil's Power should be taken from him; but earnestly pray to God for Strength to resist him, and fight until Death. For Jesus Christ in the Prayer which he left to Christians, has not asked to be free from Temptations; but only, not to be led to follow Temptation, and to be delivered from Evil. And since there is no other [Evil but Sin, we pray only to be delivered from it, and not from Temptation; which is often profitable and saving to us, yea, sometimes necessary to our Frailty.

For our Nature is so Feeble and Corrupt, that it could not remain Faithful to God, without Tribulations; for usually it forgets it self in great Prosperity. We see daily among Men, that he who Prospers becomes great and proud, and settles himself in the World as in an abiding Place; and that on the contrary, he who is in Adversity and Tribulation, becomes humble, and has his recourse to God. I speak of such as are Well-meaning and Pious; for to the Wicked all turns to Evil: If they Prosper, they offend God the more; and if they are in Adversity, they blaspheme him, and despair.

And as these things befall Persons in Temporal Prosperity and Adversity, so do they also to them that seek after True Vertue; for if they are not tryed by Tentations and Sufferings, they will not persevere in Vertue. Tho' they had attained to the highest Knowledge of Divine Mysteries; tho' they had the Gift of Prophecy and of working Miracles; all would vanish into Smoak, if they have not past through the Furnace of Tentations and Tribulations.

For we cannot in this Life arrive at that degree of Perfection in which *Adam* was at his Creation; who yet fell very grossly into Sin against his God. He forgot God, and turn'd himself to the Creatures; because he had all sorts of Prosperity, Joy, Content, and Pleasure: And because he knew no Evil, he could not imagine that this turning from God would render him so Miserable; for he had never felt any Misery.

But after that he was tempted by the Devil, and saw by experience, that Earthly Pleasures and Contentments had rendred him so Miserable, he was careful not to cleave to them any longer, and loved rather to embrace Sufferings and Penitence, as he did, all the time of his Life, than to remain in the Pleasures of an Earthly Paradise; which by sensible Delights had made him forget his God: And if

*Adam,*

*Adam*, a Creature so Noble, so Holy, and so Perfect as God created him, could not remain constant in the Fidelity which he owed his Creator, before his Tryal of Tentations, as he certainly did after them; how should we, contemptible and frail Creatures, born with an inclination to Evil, be able to remain Faithful to God, without being proved by Tentation? Our Souls should be like Wood silvered on the out-side, which rusts with a little Rain; but we must endeavour to render them Silver or Gold, purified by the Fire of Tentations and Tribulations; otherwise we can never arrive at True Vertue, to which, you my Son, aspire.

You must therefore rejoyce, rather than be afflicted, that the Devil hath Power to tempt you; for his Tentations serve to perfect your Soul and to the acquiring of True Vertue; to which you can never attain without passing through the Furnace of Tribulations and Tentations of the Devil. This Furnace is the most necessary Instrument for the Perfection of your Soul. Constrain your self therefore to embrace them, as *St. Andrew* embrac'd the Cross, saying, *O Good Cross!* Say you also, O Blessed Tentation! seeing by it I shall become agreeable to God.

Perhaps when you were in the World you loved your Mistresses Favours or Colours; shew now that you have chosen Jesus Christ for your Lover; love and carry willingly his Colours; esteem as Favours all the Tentations which the Devil gives you; for Jesus Christ was cloathed all the Days of his Life with Tentations and Sufferings, both from Devils and Men. You must then wear his Livery, if you will be his Servant.

Do you not perceive, my Son, that the Devil tempts you every Day; yea every Hour and Moment; and that therefore you have need to fight continually, if you would be saved. It is a good sign that you perceive and feel the Tentations; for many do not feel it, and follow in every thing the Temptation of the Devil.

Would you willingly be seiz'd with that Lethargy? And would you wish that the Devil should tempt you no more? That would be an evident sign that he held you as his own; for ordinarily he tempts but very little the Persons who calmly do his Will: He leaves such in Quiet, and they are well pleas'd that they are not vext with Tentations. They imagine themselves to be then in a good State, tho' in effect they be in the greatest of all Tentations.

But

But God has delivered you from this Danger, in making you know and feel Tentation; so you can no longer be ignorant of it. For I have shewed you it too plainly, and you feel it also upon Occasions. I see by the Eyes of the Spirit, that the Devil moves your Passions, as soon as I open my Mouth to speak to you; and I feel that your inward Motions are stirred up to oppose and contradict mine.

This cannot proceed from your self, for you have resolved assuredly to hear and follow me; because you are convinc'd in your Conscience that the Spirit of God governs me; and yet you cannot do it upon occasion; and you feel fightings against whatever I propose to you. Now if you will not resist this, you shall always follow the Will of the Devil, which you desire not to do.

You must therefore watch continually, and be never weary to resist the Devil, no more than he is to tempt you. The greatest Assault he gives you now, is to make you contradict and oppose my Will. And that because he sees, if you follow my Will, you shall assuredly follow the Will of God, seeing I have no other Will but his.

And therefore it is that he acts continually in you to contradict me; and your Spirit strives with mine, as *Gabriel* did with *Lucifer*. You must resolve to whom you will yield the Victory. If you will that the Spirit which is in you have the uppermost, that shall be the Devil's Will. But if you will, that the Spirit which is in me, have the Victory, you must resist your own, and be jealous of it in every thing. For from an Evil Spirit nothing that's Good can proceed. Now you cannot doubt that the Spirit which is in you is Evil, seeing it sets its self against mine, and does the things which you would not do of your own Will; and at the bottom of your Soul you are displeas'd that you contradict me; and that you are not conform'd to my Will. For your own Will cannot be contrary to it self, and cannot will that which it does not will.

And so we must conclude, that it is the Evil Spirit who acts in you against your Will, and since you desire not to obey him, you ought to be well pleas'd that I resist him on occasions. For I hold him for my Enemy, and I will oppose him with all my Power, in all those in whom I perceive him, as I do in you. I am sure then that it is the Devil, that Evil Spirit, who inspires in you these Oppositions to my Will. For if it were not he that opposes it, you would joyfully follow all that I wish and desire.

Resist

Resist therefore valiantly your own Inclinations; and suspect all the Motions of your Nature, to which the Devil is united, and by these Motions he acts in you. But receive my Sentiments, and follow that to which I am mov'd, and you shall follow assuredly the Spirit of God: So shall you carry the Victory over that Evil Spirit, who troubles you now. Submit your Understanding to the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and never think your self Wiser than he in any thing. For Men are now abandoned to the Spirit of Error; and their best Sciences, are but Ignorance; their Wisdom, Folly. And tho' you think sometimes, you have reason to contradict me, yet do it not; and afterwards you shall see that your Reason cannot be better than mine, which you may experience. In the mean time I remain

Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, May 29. 1672.  
St. Vet.

*Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

## LETTER XX.

### Spiritual Diligence is Necessary to Salvation.

*To the same. To whom is shewn a Fourteenth Snare of the Devil, more pernicious than the rest, viz. Spiritual Negligence: He is moved to Spiritual Diligence, by Consideration of the Diligence usually bestowed on Temporal Things, which the Children of this World do Administer with more Care and Prudence than the Children of Light do Spiritual Things.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Perceive, it appears somewhat difficult to you, to watch continually so narrowly, over all your Words and Actions. But believe me, if you do it not, the Devil will certainly

certainly surprize you in every thing, and you will obey him without knowing it. For he is a most subtil Spirit, who still watches, and never rests. It is necessary therefore, to come over all Difficulties, and to resolve absolutely for the Combat, if you would obtain Salvation, and tend to True Vertue. For without fighting, there is no Victory; and unless you apply your Spirit to watch diligently over all your Words and Actions, you shall fall into all sort of Evil.

For this Reason, they call Negligence a Mortal or Capital Sin. Now this Sloth is not understood to be a Mortal Sin, for want of sufficient bodily Labour. For many Persons are not oblig'd to this bodily Labour, having other Occupations of Body and Spirit, more profitable and necessary sometimes than bodily Labour: And when they apply themselves to those Good and Useful Things, they do not fall into that Sin of Negligence, which is called a Mortal Sin; for every one ought to be employed in different things, according to Mens different Conditions or Circumstances.

A Sick Person cannot Labour bodily, and sometimes also not in Spirit, because of his Infirmary. And yet he does not fall into the Mortal Sin of Sloth. For by Acts of Resignation to the Will of God, he may be more diligent than one that labours both in Body and Spirit. A good Master of a Family does of-times labour more in overseeing his Servants, than a Labourer who delves the Ground. An Architect labours more in ordering the Building of a House, than the Carpenter that builds it. So is it with other Persons, who perform their Duty; every one in his State and Vocation.

So that we must not think that those commit the Sin of Negligence, who do not labour bodily; but all those who neglect to watch over their Souls, and to discover the Temptation of the Devil, seeing such neglect their Eternal Happiness, and consent tacitely to the Devils Tentation, which is certainly a Mortal Sin, and causes Damnation. This is the Reason why this Sloth is reckon'd amongst Capital Sins, and ought to be call'd Mortal, since it causes Death to the Soul.

For he who through Negligence does not resist the Devil, leaves his Soul to him for a Prey. And he who searches not diligently for all sort of means to find True Vertue, will never obtain it, but shall die without, and never come to Eternal Happiness.

*And*

And therefore of necessity you must use Spiritual Diligence, if you would be saved. For it were but flattering of your self to think that God will receive your Excuses, when you shall say to him, *I knew not that the Devil had so much subtilty and power to tempt us*, or shall think to persuade him, that you could not abstain from Sin, because of your Frailty; and that you could not attain to True Vertue, because you could not find the Way to it.

For God will not be put off with all these Excuses and false Reasons; for he searches the Reins, and tries the Consciences, and sees the least motions of our Wills. And he knows (without needing Witnesses) what Diligence we have given to watch over our Souls, and what endeavours we have used to avoid Sin, and to follow True Vertue.

For God is not as Men, who amuse one another with the false Philosophy which they have learn'd in the Schools; which serves only to maintain Lies, and to excuse the Wickedness of one another. They invent fine Words, to make Lies pass for Truth, and they please themselves with these fine Words; and suffer themselves to be persuaded, that Falshood is Truth, when it is adorned with the fine Terms of their false Philosophy.

But God looks to the essence and reality of a thing, and sees even to the bottom of our Souls; and so he knows if we have truly done all Diligence to discover the Wiles of the Devil, and to find out the means to arrive at True Vertue. If he find therefore that through our Negligence we have done neither the one nor the other, we are condemn'd, without place for Excuses.

And therefore, my Child, do not deceive your self. Think not to find Excuses before God, when you have lived in Spiritual Negligence, for he will not accept them. He has given you a Body, and a Spirit, that you may apply them both diligently to avoid Evil, and follow Good.

But the Misery is, Men now are fallen into so profound a Blindness, that they employ both Body and Soul in Care and Diligence to acquire Earthly things; and thereby render themselves incapable of Spiritual Diligence; for when a Vessel is fill'd with Dung, nothing that's Good can be put into it.

Alas! What, I pray you, are all the Cares of the Business and Affairs of the World, but Dung, which has fill'd your Spirit? You were a diligent Merchant; and your Care and Diligence has heap'd up Money to you; but now what

will you do with that Money? You cannot expend it for Meat, Drink, and Cloathing, nor can you carry it with you at Death; and if you leave it to your Relations, they will become thereby more Proud and Vicious.

So that which way soever you consider it, you must acknowledge that your Spirit has been always filled with the Dung of Cares and Diligence for Earthly Things. And it is no wonder then that you could not discover the Wiles of the Devil, nor the means which lead to True Vertue, because your Diligence was taken up about other things. But now that God of his Goodness has discovered to you the Truth of these things, you must endeavour to use the same Diligence for discovering the Temptations of the Devil, and the means to attain to True Vertue, which formerly you used in your Temporal Affairs. I believe you would not then let slip any Occasion, where you saw any Profit, without accepting it; and would not suffer your self to be deceived, when you discovered the Tricks that they would put upon you.

Now, if you was so vigilant for the Goods which pass away so swiftly, and can give no help at Death; How can it be difficult for you now to be as Diligent to discover the Devil, and the sure way of True Vertue, that thereby you may gain Goods that shall never end?

Ought you not therefore rather to double your Diligence, Care, and Labour, to acquire Eternal Goods, than to find difficulty in it? which you did not find in acquiring the Goods of this World. Do you think them more worthy than those which are Eternal? I do not think so of you, seeing there is no Comparison to be made there. For Temporal Goods afford nothing to our Souls, but Care to keep them, and Regret to leave them; whereas Vigilance to acquire Eternal Goods, brings an inward Joy, Hope in God, and Repose in the Soul. And beside, we cannot live in Spiritual Negligence without committing the Mortal Sin of Sloth.

I know you desire not to live in Sin; but you have not sufficiently discovered wherein this Sin of Sloth does consist. You would think it a great Quiet to be able to live without Temptation, and without watching so exactly over your Words and Actions; but that small Quiet which you might have thereby in this Life, would cause you much Disquiet to all Eternity.



For we are not come into this World to rest; but to care, to watch, and to labour for our Salvation, ever till we have obtain'd it. We must not therefore change the Order of God. He has sent us into this World, as into a Place of Banishment, or into a Prison of Penitence, to satisfy his Divine Justice; and we forsooth would live here in Ease, without Care and Diligence, and without Watching against our Enemies. And yet worldly Persons watch sometimes Day and Night to gain a little Money, or to acquire some vain Honour, or infamous Pleasure.

Believe me, Son, these Worldlings shall rise up against us in the Day of Judgment, and upbraid us, that they watched, and cared, and labour'd in the Service of the World, more than you have done in the Service of God. Apply your self therefore the Diligence that is necessary for discovering the Wiles of the Devil, your sworn Enemy; for he will not cease to tempt you, and endeavour to surprize you, so long as you live in this World: You must not therefore cease to watch over your Words and Actions, that you may resist him always. And this is the Reason why the Scripture says, *Our Life is a continual Warfare.*

Now you must not take this Diligence to be a difficult thing; for Custom will make it easie: and withal it is most necessary, useful, and profitable, far beyond that of things Bodily and Temporal. For Durable and Eternal things are much more to be valued, than those which are Mortal and Transitory.

And yet we see what Care the Men of the World take for this Present Life, which is of so short Continuance: For a Gentleman will take heed to all his Words and Actions, that he do or say nothing against his Reputation. He has his Spirit also always bent to observe if others bear him the Respect and Honour, which he desires; and all his Cares tend to preserve his Reputation in this World, neglecting no occasion to maintain it. He even sometimes exposes his Life for a Point of Honour; or takes away the Life of another, of whom he thinks he has received some Affront.

And what Care, what Study, and what Fatigues, do not they take who would accomplish themselves in any Science, whether in Divinity, Law, or Physick? How many Schools must they resort to? How many Books must they buy? How many Masters must they seek out for? And what Care must they take to observe things well,

that they may attain to the Reputation of Learned Men?

And tho' all such Honours be vain and perishing, yet you know, my Son, how much Care a Merchant must take to order his Affairs. There are many who neglect often to Eat, Drink, and Sleep, that they may attend constantly their Gain. How much Care does a Labourer, and a Tradesman take to gain a little Food? And God gives you yours so liberally, without Care or Trouble, that you may take so much the more Care of your Salvation, and Labour the more in the Perfection of your Soul.

Is it just then, that you should complain of a little Difficulty you have to watch over your Words and Actions, that you may discover the Wiles of the Devil, and find the means to attain to True Vertue? This I think is the least thing that a Christian ought to do to attain to Eternal Life and Happiness. For Man is created for no other End but for this Eternity. If then he is capable (as it appears he is) to be careful, watch and labour for things Temporal and Transitory; how much more ought he to do the same, that he may attain Life Eternal?

We see Merchants go over Sea and Land, and put their Life in Hazard to gain a little Money. We see Tradesmen toil and sweat in excessive Labour, and do even mean and nasty Works to gain their poor Nourishment. We see hired Servants are subject and obedient to the Will of their Masters, and watch and perform diligently the Services they must render them, and that to gain a small Hire or Wages.

And a Christian will not do all these things, to keep himself out of the Snares of his Enemy, and to acquire True Vertue, which guides his Soul to Eternal Life. Would it not be a great Weakness to say, that it is Difficult to watch always over our Words and Actions, that we may be well-pleasing to God, while we see all Men do the same thing, upon accounts that no way deserve it?

How much Care does a faithful Servant take to serve his Master well? He studies almost Night and Day to do what he knows is agreeable to him; he performs diligently what he knows to be his Will; and when he has serv'd him well, and gain'd his Favour, he obtains nothing but pitiful Temporal Wages.

I have heard a Story of a Servant, who had faithfully serv'd a Prince, so that he was well satisfied with him; and

and therefore promised to give him whatever he would ask of him. It happened a long time after that Promise, that the Servant fell sick and was like to die; when he felt himself in Extremity, he beg'd earnestly for a Visit from his Prince; who being come to his Bed side, he ask'd what he desir'd of him. The Servant begg'd that he might not die of that Disease, and that he might live yet for some Years. But the Master told him that was not in his Power, and that he must ask something else of him. After this, the Servant begs One Year's Life, or One Month's, and at last One Day's Life only. But the Prince continues to tell him, that he could not give him what he ask'd, seeing it was not in his Power; and that he must ask of him things possible; as Money, Physick, Places, or other things that were in his Power. But the Servant replied, that he needed neither Money, nor Places, nor Phycsik, which could not prolong his Life for so much as One Day; and that he begg'd of him the Assurance of his Salvation, since he could not prolong his Life; that if he must die, he might at last die in Peace, and with Assurance to die Happy, and to be Saved. This Demand afflicted the Prince very much, and he told him that his Salvation did depend upon the Grace of God, and consequently it was not in his Power to promise it to him, and far less to give it.

This grieved the Servant so exceedingly, that turning away from his Prince, and turning his Face to the Wall, he said, *O Wretch that I am! have I past all the Days of my Life in serving and pleasing a Master, who is not able to assist me in my greatest need? Not so much as to give me One Hour's Life; I will not henceforth serve so impotent a Master.* And in this Resolution he made a Vow to God, *That if he should restore him his Health, he would forsake Men, and retire to the Desert, to serve God only, and to attend the Perfection of his Soul; and so give himself to a Lord who could give him Life and Salvation.*

Which he did in effect; for God having restored him to Health, he retired to the Desert, and there for some Years led a good Life, and in the end died well. Does not this Story open your Understanding, to perceive the Blindness of Men, who spare nothing in the Service of the World; but bestow therein their Cares and Labours without Scruple, to please Men, such as themselves, or to gain a little earthly Goods?

For tho' this Story were not true (as I firmly believe it is) yet we see daily that every one Cares and Labours for a little Money, or a little Favour, which they expect from Men; tho' it is most certain they can give us nothing that's Solid, and they leave us at Death, and cannot give us so much as One Hour's Life.

Ought we not to be ashamed and confounded to say or think, that it is Difficult to watch always over our Words and Actions, that we may discover the Snares of the Devil, and the means to attain to True Vertue; seeing our Eternal Happiness depends upon it, and there is nothing can concern us so nearly as that?

For the Devil spies out all Occasions to surprize us; and if we are not well on our Guard, we shall not speak one Word, nor do one Action, wherein he will not cause us to Sin, tho' we do not perceive it: For he will make us speak what we ought to keep in silence, and to be silent of what we ought to speak; to draw thence his Advantage, and to bring Disorder and Confusion in every thing, that he may cause us to Sin, or others by our means.

And therefore, I pray you, be diligent, and watch over all your Actions, that you may overcome the Devil, and attain to True Vertue. Which she wishes you, who loves your Salvation, and remains always

Holstein, near Gottorp-  
Castle, Jan. 2. 1672.  
*St. Vet.*

*Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoipette Bourignon.

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LET-

# LETTER XXI.

## Spiritual Diligence Necessary, beyond all other Vertues.

*To the same. Shewing him how Necessary Spiritual Diligence is, to confirm the Mind in Vertue; and to remove yet Two Impediments of the Devil, viz. (15.) Sins of Omission, wherewith the Devil tempts good Persons; and (16.) Self-love, which every where mingles it self, and is a continual Sin.*

*My Dear Child,*

**Y**OU must know that Spiritual Diligence is the most necessary of all Vertues, without which you cannot persevere in any other Vertue; and the Devil will always endeavour to make you lose them by degrees, if you keep not firmly that of Spiritual Diligence.

For if he see that you have obtain'd the Vertue of Humility, he will excite Occasions of Pride, as the Praises of Men, Prosperity in Temporal Goods, and such-like, to make you lose that Humility, which you have already obtain'd by the Grace of God. Be always on your Guard then, with Spiritual Diligence, otherwise you shall insensibly lose Humility, e're you be aware.

Which happened to me; for after that God had given me the Vertue of Humility, I felt Pride to arise again in my Heart: I felt a Dissatisfaction when Men did not give me some Title of Honour, but call'd me by my Simple Name: I even murmur'd at their Incivility, and tho' I discovered nothing of it outwardly, my Humility was notwithstanding weakn'd inwardly.

So that if God had not given me Spiritual Diligence, to watch continually over my Soul, I had assuredly lost that excellent Vertue of Humility, as also that of Voluntary Poverty. For after that I was entirely disengag'd from coveting this World's Goods, and had effectually forsaken them, I felt covetous Thoughts for many Years after. For some Pious Persons desired me to put some Money in fel-

lowship with them in their Trading, which I did with an intention to bestow all the Gain upon the Poor. But after I had taken this Resolution, I began to argue with my self, if it would not be enough to leave them the half of the Gain, or some part of it, and keep the rest for my self.

But when I examin'd my Conscience with Spiritual Diligence, I discovered that the Devil intended thereby to make me relapse into the Covetousness of the Goods which by Vertue I had abandon'd. This happened to me also many Years after, on a time when I was at *Matines* about some Affair, I took a fancy to buy some Laces (for they are made there in abundance) with a Design to sell them dearer at *Lisle*, and so save the Expence of my Voyage. Now after I had bought them, and saw appearance of Gain, I thought I might well keep that Gain for my self, tho' I was then in an Hospital, which I had undertaken to Govern out of Charity, and there to employ all my Labour and Industry for the Advantage of those Miserable Girls, without seeking my own particular Profit.

But the Devil endeavours always to surprize Persons of Good-Will by most subtil Snares, unless they remain firmly fix'd in Spiritual Diligence, and watch over all their Words and Actions. For tho' it seems often that our Actions are Good, Reasonable, and for a Good End; yet the Devil slips in, and attempts to get his Advantage. And when he cannot gain much, he contents himself with little; but yet he always does some Hurt to the Perfection of our Souls, or that of others.

So that we must be Diligent, that we may hinder him from gaining any thing. Now he can do us no Hurt, when we perceive it, and have our Will fix'd in God, and a Resolution to tend to True Vertue. For when we discover the Snares of the Devil, we shall assuredly resist him; but if we fall into Spiritual Negligence, he will ensnare us in all things. And I believe we shall not speak a Word, from which the Devil will not draw some Advantage against our Souls, or those of others. For he will make us be silent of what we ought to speak for our Spiritual or Temporal Advancement, and for the Good and Edification of our Neighbour.

In all these cases the Devil will play the Dumb, and keep us silent, when we should speak. At another time he'll play the Orator, making us speak and discourse of that of which we ought to be silent, and so will draw from

from our Words great Sins ; for both Good and Evil Persons are often offended at our Words. If we speak the Truth, they are not capable to hear it, for it is like a Two-edged Sword : So that even Pious Persons themselves cannot bear with it, when it Reproves, seeing Correction is never agreeable in the time when it is given.

But if we speak Falshood, or say any thing to please Men, the Wicked as well as the Good shall be thereby stumbled. For our Example will fortifie the Wicked in their Wickedness and Falshood ; and the Good will be stumbled, that we who profess Vertue, are not true in every thing, and will yet please the World, and worldly Men.

So that on every hand we give Advantage to the Devil, whether we speak, or hold our peace ; and that as long as we have not obtain'd Spiritual Diligence, to watch over all our Words and Actions. Now if you, my Child, reflect upon your self, you shall find by Experience that you do or say nothing without sinning. But because the Devil keeps you yet in Spiritual Negligence, you do not perceive it but by chance.

For he darkens your Memory, that you may not remember what's necessary ; and he represents to your Mind what you ought to forget, and thus makes you do according to his Will, both in Spiritual and Temporal Concerns. For it is indifferent to him by what he ensnares us.

But he will be loth to tempt by Evil Actions, such as seek to become Disciples of Jesus Christ. He tempts them only by Omissions, for he knows they will not follow his Suggestions in Evil Things, but readily in Omissions ; and so he makes them neglect, or forget the things which are for the Honour of God, and the Salvation of their own Souls, or that of others.

Now he gains much more with Good Persons by these Omissions, than he would by Actions ; seeing Evil Actions displease the Good, and are blameable before Men. Therefore they would not commit them, tho' the Devil did tempt them ; if it were only that they may not give an ill Example or Scandal to their Neighbour.

But Sins of Omission are more secret, and difficult to discover ; and consequently more dangerous for Souls, who have not Spiritual Diligence ; for they fall into Spiritual Negligence insensibly, and without perceiving it : And even when they are fallen therein, they often know not that they have sinned, attributing this Negligence to the weakness



ness of their Memory, or the infirmity of their Understanding; without perceiving that the Devil occasions the forgetting the things that are good and necessary for the Body and Soul of Man; which is a subtil Snare of Satan. Therefore, my Child, you must watch carefully, lest he surprize you ignorantly.

For it will not be enough before God to say, *I thought not of it, or I forgot it*; seeing we are always obliged to think upon and remember the things that are saving and necessary. Hence is the Proverb, *He that sins ignorantly, goes ignorantly to Hell*. And it is said somewhere, *that Ignorance does not excuse Sin*. To shew that Spiritual Diligence is expressly necessary for him who would work out his Salvation, and that God admits of no Excuses, in what Man is oblig'd to do.

I believe, among Men, every one will be ready to justify and excuse himself; for being all frail and imperfect, they flatter and excuse also such as are like themselves, when they love them. Then they attribute to frailty that which comes from Spiritual Negligence. But God, who tries the Reins and searches the Conscience, makes another Judgment of our Actions and Omissions. He will condemn for Sin, whatever we have neglected to do for his Glory and our Salvation, or for the Salvation of our Neighbour, when it was in our Power.

For it will not be enough to say to God, *I have not found it*, if you us'd not your necessary endeavour to seek. There are Persons so imprudent as to believe that God will not call them to an account for that which they have not known; in which they shall find themselves greatly mistaken at Death. For we are still obliged to seek that which we need to find. Now we ought absolutely to know the means by which we may attain to Salvation; as are the Commandments of God, and the Precepts of the Gospel. And he that performs not what is there ordained, cannot be saved; for it will not be enough for him to say, *I knew not the Commandments of God, nor the Law of the Gospel*; seeing he is obliged to know both, and to do all possible Diligence to learn them, that he may obey them. If then we have not this Spiritual Diligence for our Salvation, we shall never obtain it. For we are obliged to know that which is necessary for Salvation; and the Ignorance of these things will not excuse Sin: So much the rather, because Jesus Christ says, *ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you*.

This

This is not to say (as many Ignorants alledge) that Jesus Christ has Satisfied all for us; seeing he exhorts us to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, to Pray, to Knock, and to do all that we can to obtain it; Teaching thereby that this Spiritual Diligence is necessary to Salvation; and these persuade themselves that they shall obtain it by the Diligence of another.

Which is but a Flattery to destroy us; seeing the Apostle admonishes us so much, *To Watch and Pray, that we enter not into Temptation.* For if the Merits of Jesus Christ had satisfied all, what need should we have to Watch and Pray? We needed but to remain in Ease and Quiet, expecting that Jesus Christ had satisfied all for us.

Then we needed not to do any thing. For it would be in vain to knock, and pray, and seek, if all were found and obtained by the Merits of Jesus Christ. This may let you see, my Son, that Men are now abandoned to the Spirit of Error, and that they know not the Truth of Things: For they make one another believe Falshoods for Truths; and would by their Glosses annul the Doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Apostles.

Now this Doctrine excites continually to Spiritual Diligence, seeing Jesus Christ says, *We must Pray always, and without ceasing.* That is to say, we must always be diligent to watch over all our Words and Actions: Otherwise we shall not speak a Word, without committing a Sin, nor do any Action that shall not be defiled; to wit, so long as we live in Corrupt Nature, in which we are born. For this Corruption loving it self, turns to its own Glory and Profit, all that we say and do.

This is a continual Sin, which we cannot avoid, but by Spiritual Diligence, or continual Prayer, which is the same thing. For being continually attacked by Sin, we must continually combat it, or yield our selves its Slaves. And tho' there were no other Devil but the Corruption of Man's Nature, we ought notwithstanding to resist it continually; seeing that Corruption is as much the Enemy of our Salvation as the Devil.

If you would, my Child, Examine well your own self, you would find by Experience, that you do not so much as one Action (how good soever in it self) which is not defiled with Self-love and Self-seeking; and that you speak not one word, which you aim not for your own Advantage, or Praise, or to Excuse and Justifie your self.

For

For Self-love seeks always its own Ease and Satisfaction, and will not have the Blame in any thing. It would even appear innocent in the grossest Faults which it commits: It speaks to Excuse them, reasons to maintain its Opinions, or what it has fancied or undertaken to maintain. In short, it employs all the Powers of the Body and the Spirit to disown its Guilt. So Proud is this Corrupt Nature, that it will not be blamed in any thing, if it can avoid it.

Now all these things are manifest Sins, which shut out of our Hearts the Love and Honour of God, that we may Love and Esteem our selves; and so break the Command, of *Loving God with all our Heart*, seeing we love our own Glory, and esteem our selves with all our Heart.

I have often declared, that the Essence of Sin consists in this, that Man withdraws his Affections from God, to place them on other things besides him: So we must conclude, that Man falls into Sin, as often as he turns to love himself. And he falls as often into Self-love, as he will needs justify or excuse himself; seeing there is nothing Just or Excusable in his Corrupt Nature. It is by Sin become altogether Evil, and cannot of it self do any Good, Spiritual or Temporal; but is filled with all sort of Evil, from which no Good can proceed.

This is a Truth, to which all the World would readily acquiesce, if they were disengag'd from Self-love. For they would see then, that *they are backward to all Good, and bent to all Evil*; that they are Ignorant, Impotent, and in short, that all we do in this Life, is only that we may be esteemed, or to avoid the Contempt and Humiliations that might befall us.

This proceeds from that Pride of Life which Sin has planted in the bottom of the Hearts of all Men that come into the World. They bring with them that Pride which makes them live in continual Sins, if they do not continually resist it, by a Spiritual Diligence; and if they do not watch over all their Words and Actions, to Limit and Bridle them according to the Law and Will of God. Which cannot be done without this Spiritual Diligence, which ought to govern all our Words and Actions, if we would attain to Salvation. Which she wishes you, who loves your Soul,

Husum, Jan. 27.

1674.

Anthoinette Bourignon.

LETTER

## LETTER XXII.

Spiritual Diligence is Necessary to  
Salvation.

*To the same. Exhorting him to Spiritual Diligence, because without it none can persevere in the Service of God, nor overcome his Corrupt Nature, and Self-love.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Cannot say enough to you of the Worth and Necessity of Spiritual Diligence, since it must occasion your Eternal Salvation, and all the Good Things we attain in this Life, and in that which is to come.

Weigh well this Necessity, that you may lay hold on it, and put it in Practice, since thereupon depends your Eternal Happiness. For tho' you had acquired many other Vertues, yet the Devil could easily ensnare you by Spiritual Negligence, and let you do well for one time, that he may ensnare you in another.

He could not hinder you to forsake the World, that you might give your self to the Service of God, since this was your absolute Resolution; neither could he hinder you from detesting Sin, and undertaking to follow True Vertue. But he waits for you in the Passage, that he may stop your Course, and hinder your Perseverance by divers Temptations, and by Occasions which he will bring about, to withdraw you from your Good Purposes. He will stir up Men of Good-will to raise Suspicions of your Resolution, and that even upon Pious Pretexts. He'll make you sometimes doubt, if you should not do better to remain in the World, and make your Light shine to others, that you may enlighten them. At another time, he'll represent to you, if you had not better Trade yet, that you might assist your Neighbour out of your Superfluity, or by your Good Example.

For the Devil tempts by all sorts of means, and when he cannot make us fall into Sin by Evil Actions, he  
insinuates

sinuates himself into our Good Works; yea, even into our Good Intentions, and mingles therewith some little of his Venom, when he cannot get in much.

He gives sometimes a weariness in the way of Vertue, and makes that seem heavy, which in effect is light; giving to the Soul a backwardness to do well, to overcome it self. He takes away also the hope of surmounting our Imperfections, and of attaining to True Vertue, that he may render our Souls Cowardly and Slothful, because they do not see the means whereby to arrive at Solid Vertue. So that he confounds our Spirits, that they may not discover the truth of things as they are before God; but may please themselves still with seeming Vertues, and fine Speculations.

For this Cause, we have need of continual Prayer, and that Spiritual Diligence; if we would persevere in the Service of God: Otherwise the Devil would gain us by one way or other. Let us therefore watch always, that he make not our first Fervour to cool, and our good Resolution of embracing True Vertue.

He will attempt, even when we have acquired Vertue, to lead us into Spiritual Negligence; perswading us, that we may well rest our selves, seeing we have acquir'd it, and that we cannot advance further in it. I have known such Persons, as have said to me, that they were arrived at the highest Degree of Vertue to which they could attain; and they said so because they had read all they could read of it: And so they judged that to read more, was but to repeat what they had already read and understood. Which to me seemed great Pride, and Spiritual Negligence, which the Devil had planted in their Heart, to make them perish by that Negligence. For not to advance in Vertue, is to recoil and fall back; seeing Man never attains that Perfection that he ought.

It is written in the Holy Scripture, *Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect*, to teach us, that we should tend to the Perfection of God himself, and never stop in the way of Vertue; but always tend to a greater Perfection; even to the last moment of our Life, that we may come the nearer to the Perfection of our Heavenly Father.

But the Devil, envious of our Happiness, endeavours to his Power to divert us. He serves himself of Spiritual Negligence, when he cannot prevail by Evil Desires or Actions. It is all one to him by what means he ensnares our

our Souls, provided he can in the end retain them to himself. Therefore be on your Guard, my Son, and before all, embrace Spiritual Diligence, as that which is most necessary for the Perseverance of Vertue.

For tho' there were no other Devil to tempt us but the Corruption of our Nature, it is sufficient to give continual Exercise to resist it. For it is so corrupted by Sin, that it continually produces Evil Effects in our Soul, to make it perish for ever. We need but follow this Nature to be damned, as I have told you elsewhere.

The Reason is, because it neither wills nor desires any thing but what is Evil, and what tends to Self-love. It is true indeed, Man was created by God altogether Perfect, and in that state of Perfection he did all well, Blessing and Honouring God; and thus he enjoyed all things without sinning: But since Man abandoned that state of Perfection by his Sin, he is become so corrupted, that all that he says or does, tends only to his own Glory, or to his own Satisfaction, which is Sin; seeing all Glory appertains to God alone, and Man ought to seek nothing but to please him; and as often as he does otherwise, he offends him.

We must therefore have this Spiritual Diligence, to watch over all our Words and Actions, unless we would live in continual Sins. For if we Eat or Drink, it is ordinarily to please our Taste, and our Sensuality, instead of taking those Necessary Things with Praise to God, who created them. If we Cloath our selves, it is also for our own Satisfaction, for our Ease and Glory, instead of Cloathing our selves in Humility, and with Confusion, because Sin has rendred us shameful, and put us in a necessity of covering the Body, to preserve it from the Injuries of the Air, which the same Sin has rendred intemperate in Cold, Heat, and Tempests.

For before Sin, Man was altogether naked, without any shame, and had no need to cloath himself, being only covered with Glory, and with Light. He was Lord and Governour over all the Elements, which were subject and obedient to him, encompassing him only for his Contentment and Pleasure.

But at present, that is, since Sin corrupted this Humane Nature, Man cannot take Pleasure in walking on the Earth, in being refresh'd with Water, or encompass'd with the Wind, without sinning, because he does all these things for his own Satisfaction, instead of doing them to please God only. If he Study, Labour, or undertake any thing,

it is always for his own Glory, Profit, and Self-satisfaction; instead of undertaking all these things for the Glory of God only, and of applying all the Forces of his Body, and Powers of his Spirit, to Glorifie God, who gave us them.

He does also often take Vain-glory in the Gifts and Talents which he has received from his God, and ascribes them to himself; as if he were Proprietor of them, and independent from the Author of all Good. Thus he forgets what is written, to wit, *That every good Gift comes from above, and descends from the Father of Lights.* They come not then from Man's Power, who can do nothing but Evil; and consequently if Man can Labour, Study, or do any other Good and Necessary Thing; these are Graces which God has given him, and can take from him in a moment.

And therefore Man has no reason of Glorifying, or of ascribing the least Good Thing to himself; which he does notwithstanding, either through Ignorance or Malice. So he has need to watch continually, if he would abstain from Sin; otherwise he will fall every moment without perceiving it.

For since he is corrupted by Sin, he cannot have a good Thought, nor speak one Word that is not defiled and mingled with Self-love, or Self-esteem, which I could shew you, my Son, by your own Experience, if you were capable of it: But all your Thoughts and Words are mingled with Impurity. I know well, that you are resolv'd in the bottom of your Soul, in general, to please God, and to sin no more; yet nevertheless, you do it as oft as you seek your own Satisfaction.

This you do through Ignorance, because you have not sufficiently discovered how much Humane Nature is corrupted by Sin, and you have not esteemed it Evil to follow it. On the contrary, you and all other Men who live according to their Corruption, have held it for a good thing to follow their own Wills, so far as they did not induce them to do any thing that was Evil or Blameable before Men.

For every one walks in this Darkness, and has no Light to know their Miseries, and the state into which Sin has brought them. Now this Ignorance makes them live securely in their Self-love, without holding it for Sin, tho in effect this Self-love is the Essence of all sort of Sins.

For if a Man Kill, Steal, commit Adultery, or do any other thing forbidden in the Commands of God, it is only



to satisfy his Self-love. If he seeks his Profit, Pleasure, or Ease; if he esteem or boast of himself, it is only to satisfy this Love; so also if he seek the Honours and Riches of this World. In short, Self love is the Womb, in which are engendred all sorts of Sins: And it robs our Heart entirely of the Love of God; which being pure, cannot remain with the impure Love of our selves.

Therefore it need not seem strange to any, that they cannot obtain the Love of God, tho' they desire it, for they can never obtain it so long as they continue in the Love of themselves. And they should rather account themselves unworthy of this Love of God, than rashly to desire that God should come to reside in a Conscience filled with Self-love, and polluted with Sins.

They who would have the Love of God, and will not forsake that of themselves, are very imprudent; seeing they would make so unsuitable a Match, as that of the Love of God (in which consists all manner of Good) with Self-love (in which consists all manner of Evil) which is intolerable, and most unreasonable: For it is the same as if they would make Cold and Heat to abide together in the same Place, which is contrary to Nature; that will never suffer this: But these two Contraries shall so wrestle together, that the stronger shall hold the Place alone.

For if we put Fire in the Water, it is extinguished when it cannot overcome the Water; but if the Fire is so great, that it can consume all the Water, it remains Victorious, and the Water is dried up.

It is even so with the Soul that desires the Love of God: It is the Place where is to be found the Cold of Self-love, and the Heat of the Love of God; and when this Self-love is stronger, it extinguishes entirely the Fire of the Love of God. But if the Love of God kindle more in the Soul, it banishes Self-love absolutely from it.

This befalls purified Souls, who scarce feel any more their Self-love, when that of God has got the upper-hand in their Heart: They live and die in this Love, and despise Self-love. But he who lives in Self-love, is the Slave of Sin, and commits it on all Occasions. Now he who would avoid these Perils, must have Spiritual Diligence, to watch still over all his Words and Actions, that he may resist the Corruption which Sin has brought into Humane Nature; which is so corrupted by Sin, that it can no longer produce any Good, whether Temporal or Spiritual; since being

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withdrawn

withdrawn from the Love of God, wherein is all Good, it is fallen into Self-love, wherein is all Evil; which produces always its like.

So that whatever we do by our Natural Motion, it is altogether Evil and Sin: And if you could well comprehend this Truth, as it is, you would always distrust your self, and never dare to do or undertake any thing, if you would not do Evil, and fall into Sin.

But Man's Rashness and Ignorance renders him bold to undertake things Temporal and Spiritual; as if he were Wise, and free of Corruption, which often precipitates him into great Faults and Sins; which he does not perceive, till after they are committed, and so cannot help them.

I believe, my Son, you have often experienced this in your self, without knowing from whence these Faults proceeded, seeing your Will was to do all well. Believe me, they proceed all from Spiritual Negligence, and because you know not yet sufficiently the Corruption of your Nature, which you have followed while in the World. You thought your self wise enough, when you could order your Temporal Affairs to your Profit.

You did not perceive, that the Devil could help you well in that; that by procuring your Prosperity, he might keep you still in the love of Earthly things, and make you neglect sufficiently those which are Eternal, as many Merchants of your Profession yet do; who instead of Labouring for the Gospel-Pearl, Labour to follow the Will of the Devil, the Enemy of their Souls, without perceiving it.

Yea, they think it a Blessing of God, that they prosper well in Temporal Affairs; but it is often a Curse, seeing *God gives his Friends Temporal Adversities, and reserves for them Eternal Joys.*

But to Men who have done some Temporal Good in this World, but have not overcome the Corruption of their Corrupt Natures, God recompences the Temporal Good they have done in this World, with Temporal Prosperities; because God leaves no Good without Recompence, nor Evil without Chastisement.

Wherefore I pray you, my Son, watch over your Soul with Spiritual Diligence, that you let not one Word or Action escape that proceeds from your Corrupt Nature; seeing it produces all manner of Sins, which would finally lead you to Eternal Damnation.

But labour to resist manfully the Corruption of your Nature, by Spiritual Diligence. Thus you must always watch over your Words and Actions, that the Devil gain you not by Spiritual Negligence; which she wishes you, who loves your Soul,

Hufum, 1 Febr. 1674.  
*St. Ver.*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

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## LETTER XXIII.

### Spiritual Diligence is Necessary to Salvation.

*To the same. To whom is shewn the Necessity of Spiritual Diligence, to watch over all the Actions of our Corrupt Nature and Self-will, and to acquire the Knowledge of our selves. Moreover, that Spiritual Negligence is a Fountain of all Evils, and is alone sufficient to Damn us: Because it renders our Soul rude, and like to a cursed Ground, which bears only Thorns and Thistles, and so is far from Meekness, Gentleness, and Humility of Heart.*

*My Dear Child,*

**I** Have entertain'd you at length with the Necessity of Spiritual Diligence, which we must have in this perillous Life. I have shewn you how Necessary it is to Salvation, and that without it none can be saved, because of the many Enemies we have to War against.

I must now shew you all the Evils which Spiritual Negligence causes. It is a Pestilence in the good Air of Vertue: For tho' you had acquired many Vertues, they could not subsist in your Soul, without Spiritual Diligence, seeing in this World we cannot be free of Enemies, who do continually attack us.

We might be for some time at rest in Vertue; but this Repose would be the most dangerous Combat of our Souls, which

which thinking to rest, as did the Rich Man in the Gospel, who had his Granaries filled ; but it was said unto him, *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee, and then whose shall those things be which thou hast heaped up ?* The same shall be said to them, who think they have acquired so many Vertues, and yet have not Spiritual Diligence; for they shall find themselves deceived at Death, because they have not watched over their Vertues, having suffered the Corruption of their Nature to reign there.

For if you are not diligent in Vertue to watch, and hinder that Vain-glory do not insinuate it self, it will take away all the force and merit of your Vertue ; seeing God says, *that he resists the Proud, and that he has nothing to do with Offerings and Sacrifices.* So also he has no need of our Vertue, when it is accompanied with Self-esteem and Vain-glory, as when we attribute any Good to our selves; seeing we are truly filled with all Evil, where there is no Good.

For Man's Nature is so corrupted by Sin, that there remains to him no Good, Spiritual or Temporal. So that we may with truth say, that there remained nothing in Man after Sin, but Ignorance, Malice, and a Power to do Evil. I know you will oppose to me, that Man by his Nature can do something that is Good, as we see the Wicked do in regard of their Temporal Affairs. They gain Money, and are helpful to their Neighbour, one can Write well, another make Accompts, one can Paint well, another is a good Carpenter, or some other good Mechanick, which is good and necessary for the Present Life. How then can we say truly, that Man can do no good thing, even in Temporals ?

It seems 'tis necessary that I should explain my self, that I may not be challeng'd of Falshood. I know that all Men in general, and each one in particular, do believe that they have some Good Thing in them, and that they can do well according to their Knowledge ; which is true, in regard of some who are even imperfect, before God : Such are they who have the skill to exercise some Art or Trade which they have learn'd.

I experienc'd this in the Girls of my Hospital at *Lisle* ; for they did very well what I had taught them. Th<sup>o</sup> otherwise I knew that they had given their Souls to the Devil, and that they were bound to him by their exp<sup>r</sup>ess Compact. This did not hinder but that they learn'd to sew well, to read, write, and guide the House ; with many other things, which they did very well. So

So that it would seem that what I affirmed is not true; to wit, that Man has nothing that's Good in him, and that he cannot do any Good; for we see they do several Good Things, even to the view of Men. But we must know that all the Good they do, proceeds not from them, but from God, who has bestowed it on them by a particular Grace and Mercy, or else they have learn'd it from other Men.

For it is a certain Truth, that Man has not any thing of himself but Sin, and that he can do no Good, Spiritual or Temporal; since all Good comes from God, and all Evil from Man and the Devil.

Now when one has learn'd from God any Good Thing, he can teach it to his Neighbour. But he cannot have this Good of himself, because Sin has filled him with all Evil, and depriv'd him of all manner of Good. Now we cannot bring out of a thing, that which is not in it.

For if the Fire were not in the Flint, it would not come forth by striking on it; and if Vertue were not in a Soul, it would not appear upon occasion; as it appear'd in *Job*, in the midst of so many Temptations: For he blest God, saying, when he was informed of the Death of his Children; *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken them, blessed be his Holy Name*; which was a Grace he had received of God. It was planted in his Soul, and thus it brought forth Fruit in its Season.

But he that lives yet in the Corruption of his Nature can bring forth nothing but Sins and Evil, since he has nothing but this in him, and no Good can proceed out of his Soul, because there is none in it. Therefore Man is foolish to believe that he can do Good either in Temporal or Spiritual Things; since in effect he marring all that he touches, and can do no Good but by a particular Grace of God.

But because Man does not sufficiently study Spiritual Diligence, that so he may come to know himself, he easily persuades himself that he is wise to do well, things Spiritual and Temporal, without noticing, that his Nature is intirely corrupted by Sin. He speaks, acts, labours, and trades of himself, as if he could do any Good, tho' all that proceeds from the Corruption of Nature is evil.

Man therefore ought always to have this Distrust of himself, that he may never follow his own Will, for all that proceeds from it is Evil; and he who believes not this Truth, will fall into many Disorders and Sins.

For this cause Jesus Christ taught Christians to deny themselves; and more he gives himself an Example of this Denial; saying, *I am not come to do my own Will, but the Will of him that sent me.*

Now if there could be in all Humane Nature a Will that is Good, it had been certainly that of Jesus Christ. We learn therefore in the Gospel that he entirely denied his own Will; saying to his Father in the Garden of Olives, *Not my Will but thy Will be done.* He says it because he knew that all the Wills of Men were corrupted by *Adam's Sin*; and consequently cannot be followed without doing *any Evil.*

And therefore Jesus Christ himself would not follow his own Will; knowing well that (as to his Mortal Nature) his own Will was Evil\*, as are those of all other Men unto whom he would make himself like, when he cloath'd himself with our Mortality.

Now if Jesus Christ prays to his Father, that his own Will might not be done, how much more ought Man, who is corrupted by his own Sins, besides the Corruption of *Adam's Sin*, which all Men have contracted from him respectively? It is thence that their Wills are become Evil, and so produce all sort of Sins; which we cannot avoid by Spiritual Diligence, watching continually over the Motions of our own Will, that we may resist Sin.

For if we fall into Spiritual Negligence, our own Will shall always have the upperhand, and will govern all our Words and Actions, which will be all Evil; and so we shall sin continually, without perceiving it. And it is by this Spiritual Negligence alone, that Souls do perish insensibly, and from it all sort of Evils do proceed. We may see this Truth in Temporal and Bodily things, for when they are neglected, it occasions much Damage. If we neglect a new born Infant, it must of necessity die, for want of Vigilance. If we take no care about it to teach it to speak, to walk and labour, it shall be brought up like a Beast; and when it is come to the use of Reason, it must labour, trade or study, if it would subsist and have its necessary Food. So that all sort of Evils should befall it by this Negligence, as to the things of the Body; and

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\* See Second Part, Letter VI. and the Accessory Letter, where this is fully clear'd.

it would even rot and be eaten up of Vermine, if neglected to be cleansed.

What Evils does not Negligence bring in Civil Affairs? Countries and Cities are ruin'd by want of Foresight. For if a Lord or Governour of a Country is not diligent to watch over what he has in Charge, his Enemies will surprize him, and he will lose his Honour and Goods, while asleep: And if the Magistrate of a Town is not diligent to watch over the Inhabitants, they will neglect their Duty, and bring into the Commonwealth things which afterwards they cannot remedy; and that because by their Negligence they have tolerated them too long.

It is the same as to the Superiour of a House or Society; if he neglect to watch over those who are under his Care, he will find himself oppress'd with Confusion, which he cannot redress afterwards. Negligence in Business empoverishes many, and makes them lose their Honour by Infamous Bankrupts.

By Negligence also the Grain and Fruits of the Earth are lost, when they are not sown and reap'd in Season. It spoils Household Provision; rusts the Iron; brings Moths in Cloaths; and in short, Negligence has brought many Rich Men to Poverty; and many who were in Honour and Reputation, into Disgrace; and it brings Damage and Evil unto every thing, even to the least things.

For if but one point of your Stockings slip, and you neglect to mend it, that point will in a little time become a great hole, and in the end will rent the whole Stocking, which by your Diligence might have been preserv'd for some Years. It is even so with many other things, which Diligence preserves and keeps in good order; whereas by Negligence they are destroyed and brought to Confusion; yea, it often causes Death.

For if a Disease were well look'd to at the beginning, it were often easily cured; but Negligence renders it difficult, and sometimes incurable; as if one in a Pleurisie be let Blood too late, he must die: And if the Nature of the Sick Person be not known, to apply Remedies proper for his Indisposition, he must die.

This is the Reason, why Men now adays live so short a while, in respect of *Adam* and his Successours who lived some Hundreds of Years; because they knew better the Temperament of Nature: Each knew what was good and needful for himself on all Occasions; but now, while Men



are ignorant of Nature, they often take Remedies contrary to their Evils, and neglect such as might recover them.

But this Negligence in Bodily or Civil things, tho' it causes so many Evils, is nothing to be regarded in comparison of Spiritual Negligence; seeing the first causes only Temporal and Transitory Evils. but the other such as are Eternal. It deprives Man of all manner of Good, and subjects him to all manner of Evil, which is Eternal Damnation.

For he that has not Spiritual Diligence to watch against the Enemies of his Soul, and over the means that he must take for his Salvation, he must perish only by this Negligence, tho' he should commit no other Sin: For it is of our Souls that the Scripture says in a perfect sense; *The Ground that is not laboured, shall bring forth Thorns and Thistles*: Because the Ground of our Souls became cursed by Sin; and being fallen into this Curse, it can no longer bring forth any wholesome Fruit, without bestowing on it great Diligence. We must dig and turn it up with the Spade of Penitence, to kill the Tares and Weeds of Corruption, which have sprung up into the Earth of our Souls.

For if these be not rooted out, they will always choke the Good Grain of True Vertue, which should thereby be stifled, even tho' it were sown in abundance in our Souls: It must be maintain'd by continual Diligence, otherwise it will bring forth no Fruit; we must watch against our Enemies; we must still resist the Inclinations of this Corrupt Nature; and finally we must continually Study the Knowledge of our Selves. For he who does not know himself, is ignorant of all, and cannot arrive at the Vertue *to be meek and lowly, and humble in Heart*, which Jesus Christ says, *we must learn of him*.

He who knows not the Miseries, the Ignorance, and the Curse, into which Sin has brought us, how can he become Meek? On the contray he will be fierce and arrogant, and presume that he is worthy of Esteem and Honour; which will also deprive him of Gentleness to his Neighbour, and likewise of Humility of Heart. For he who does not know himself, thinks he has need of no Body, and consequently will not be benign nor loving to his Neighbour; and far less humble in Heart. Which comes for want of knowing his own Misery, and the wretched Estate into which Sin has brought him; and so he cannot humble

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ble himself according to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ which is so good and saving; and which I exhort you, my Son; to follow for your Eternal Happiness. For I am

Husum, February, 3.  
1692. St. Ver.

*Your very Affectionate in  
Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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## LETTER XXIV.

That Men are Idolaters of their own  
Corruption, and Enemies of Vertue.

*To the same. Adverting him, that the Continuation of that Subject is interrupted by the Devil's exciting the Wise of this World, Enemies of Vertue, and Friends of Corrupt Nature, to distract the Mind of the Writer, by their Disputes, Lies, and Calumnies, and all manner of Persecutions.*

*My Dear Child,*

I Have yet many things to say to you of Solid Vertue, but I have no time at present, seeing all my Enemies strive to hinder it. I doubt not but it is the Devil, our common Enemy, who will not suffer that we speak of Solid Vertue. Besides, he keeps Men at present in Spiritual Negligence with apparent Vertues, and they take them for solid and true ones; therefore he would make them rest in Self-love, without arriving at Solid Vertue.

Now since he cannot hinder me to discover it, because God makes it known to me, he Labours to his Power to hinder its being published. He induces several Persons to write against me, thus to take up my time in answering them; and to entertain me with matters of Contradiction, instead of True Vertue: Which bereaves me of my time, and gives me the Displeasure of leaving this Treatise of Solid Vertue. Yet I must apply my self, to repeal the Calumnies

lumnies and Lies, which they have spread against me in divers Places ; as the Quakers of *England* have done.

So I was obliged to write a large Advertisement against them; for if I did not give Testimony to the Truth, against so many false Accusations and Lies which they have made, I should be guilty of the Sin which these false Accusers do commit, and should be the cause that Good Men do not follow the Truths which I declare from God. For so many false Reports would render them suspect; the rather, when I am not attack'd by the common People, but by the Church-men, and the Learned, who are esteem'd worthy of Credit.

Those Learned strive at present to kill the Spirit of Jesus Christ, as such like formerly kill'd his Body. You have seen the Libel, which *John Berkendal*, in the Name of the Ministers of *Altena* of *Calvin's* Reformation, has written against me: And I was oblig'd to give Testimony to the Truth against so many Lies, by a large Treatise, to which are added the Testimonies of a great many Persons, yet alive and worthy of Credit. That Work hinder'd me from Writing more to you of Solid Vertue; tho' I know this is very profitable and necessary for you, and for all who aspire to become true Christians, as you do.

There are now adays so many Persons deceived by Apparent Vertues, who still learn and never come to the Knowledge of the Truth. They think they have already True Vertue, whereas they remain yet altogether in Self-love. Therefore is the Devil so angry, when I write of True Vertue, lest the Deceit of the False be discovered by the Knowledge of True Vertue. But the Devil cannot hinder me from knowing it, since God discovers it to me; therefore he strives to bereave me of time to write it, that neither you nor other Souls, who aspire to Vertue, may know it. This is the cause why he makes divers Persons to write against me; that so I may not have time to write of Solid Vertue. He labours to occupy me always in opposing Slanderers, but he deceives himself; for amidst the Refutations of the Calumnies of my Adversaries, I intermix always something of Solid Vertue. You ought, my Son, to make use of it as Instruction how to order your Life aright, and become a true Disciple of Jesus Christ.

Examine well then all that comes from my Pen, and you shall always find them more and more enlightning and wholsom

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wholsom Instruction; which you will chiefly find in the last (23) Letters which I have written to you, concerning the words of Jesus Christ; *Learn of me for I am meek, lowly and humble of Heart*: All that matter will suffice for Allment to your Soul, till I can write more unto you; which I shall do when I have answered Two Treatises which the Disciples of *Labadie* have written against me. I have not had leasure yet to read them, but I conjecture they shall be, as the rest, full of Errors and Calumnies.

And that, because all they who follow the motions of Corrupt Nature, are in Error and Falshood; and are not at peace with the Truth; for these are two Contraries, which do always thrust out one another.

This is the Reason why all those Learned do oppose the Doctrine which I advance. It is not such as they have learned in the Schools; and besides they cannot approve any thing but what maintains them in the Honours, Profits, Eases and Conveniencies of this Life. To which the Doctrine of Jesus Christ is quite contrary; for he speaks of nothing but Poverty, Contempt, Sufferings, and Persecution for Righteousness sake. And consequently the Doctrine of the Learned now adays is altogether Anti-Christian; that is to say, quite contrary to that of Jesus Christ. Not that their words are so contrary: For they read the same Gospel which Jesus Christ and his Apostles taught. But they so gloss and explain the words of the Gospel, that they quite invert the Sense of them: And nevertheless, they live securely, though all their Actions, Manners, and Desires be quite contrary to the Doctrine of the Gospel.

For every one now Idolizes his own Will; and Jesus Christ said, *that we must renounce it*; I think all Christendom is become at present the People of *Ephesus*, who worshipped *the great Diana*; with this difference, that Christendom now adays adores *the Corruption of the Flesh*, whereas those adored a Statue of Gold or Silver. For we see the Learned strive who shall find out the most subtil Inventions, by which they may flatter Men in their Sins, or perswade them, that they may safely follow the motions of their Corrupt Nature; and withal attain to Salvation. So that every one follows this Doctrine, without perceiving that it is Evil.

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This is the Reason why every one *Adores* that *Diana* of *Corrupt Nature as a Goddess*; and thus they employ all their Time and Wealth, to Nourish, Honour, and Satisfie *Corrupt Nature*. And more, they think there is no Evil in so doing; seeing the Ministers and the Learned do the same, and promise Salvation to the People that live in this Idolatry.

But they ought to Teach them in effect, the Mortification of their Senses, the Corruption of their Nature, how much it is spoiled by Sin, and finally, the Necessity of Denying our selves, that we may be saved, as Jesus Christ Taught by Word and Deed.

But these Savage Pastors will not Teach this unto their Flocks, and far less will they put it in Practice themselves. Yea, they will not suffer another to Teach these Christian Truths. For this cause they Persecute me in all Places, and would gladly destroy me, because I have written of True Vertue. The same befel *St. Paul* by them of *Ephesus*, when he taught the Truth: For they said among themselves, *That they should lose their Gain, if they suffered Paul to continue Preaching Jesus Christ; and that he would destroy the Worship of the Great Diana, and cause that the Goldsmiths should gain no more in making little Diana's of Gold and Silver.*

It is just so with the Learned now adays, who are as the Masters of the Great *Diana* of *Corrupt Nature*, which every one Adores for his own Particular. But the Learned are the Masters, to gain Money by the Worship and Adoration of *Corrupt Nature*. Thus they Speak and Teach the People such Things as please their Corruption; and endeavour to please Men, that they may receive Advantages from them, which they will not lose.

When therefore I begin to speak of True Vertue, they are all alarmed against me, as those of *Ephesus* were against *St. Paul*: But the Learned take also the Judges to their Assistance, and Persecute me, that I may be banished, or forbid to write or speak of True Vertue. Some wish me dead, others burnt, others that I were thrown into the midst of the Sea, that I might speak no more of Solid Vertue; and so their Gain and Trade might not be lessened, nor their Shops unfrequented; that is, they would sell no more their frivolous Discourses to please Men.

It is this, which lately alarmed them in the Town of *Flensburg*, whither I had gone about some Business: For the Ministers no sooner had any Suspicion that I was in their Town,

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Town, but they Preached in their severall Churches, that I was a Vagabond, that I had a Devilish Doctrine, that I was pernicious; and finally, that no Body should Lodge me.

So that I behov'd to go away secretly, for fear of being Massacred by the Rabble and Children, whom the Preachings of the Ministers had animated against me. For they spoke of me with great spite and horror, crying out publicly, that my Doctrine was worse than that of the *Jews*. And moreover they added, That my Doctrine is a Mass of all the Old Heresies that ever were in the World.

Yet I will not teach any thing by my Writings or Discourses, but what Jesus Christ taught. And if there be any thing in them contrary to this, I detest and revoke it; as I have often offered to revoke all that they would shew me to be contrary to the Holy Scripture.

But it is not for Errors, or any Evil in my Writings, that they Persecute me; seeing they can shew me no such thing in them. They Persecute me then, because I declare truly what is True Vertue, and how a true Christian, or a Disciple of Jesus Christ ought to live. I know well they Mask these things, saying, *There are Errors in my Writings*, but no body lets me see them.

They know not what to say, that they may condemn the Truths which I maintain; for the Learned said first, that I brought no New Thing, and that they had Preach'd and Taught the same things Twenty Years ago. But when they saw in the Book, Entituled, *The Testimony of the Truth*, Truths more clear, and more particular of the Divine Mysteries, than those which they had learned in the Schools, they said presently, these are Errors, and never any Person wrote such things.

So that God must be regulated according to their Studies, and must give no new Graces to Men now adays. But he must square his Light by the Rule of their Scholastick Doctrine, and not send this Holy Spirit, *promised by Jesus Christ, who shall teach all Truths*. Men then resist the Holy Spirit, and will not hear of other Truths but those they have learned in the Schools.

It is very lamentable to see Men such Enemies of their Eternal Happiness, rejecting the Light of Truth which comes in this last Time, as the Prophets of God have foretold; *That he will pour out his Spirit on all Flesh; that your Sons and Daughters shall Prophecie, and Old Men see Visions.*

Now

158 *That Men are Idolaters of their own, &c. Part I.*

Now because I repeat the same things with many others from God, they would kill me, as was done to the Ancient Prophets. They think to hinder thereby that True Vertue should be known, and far less practised.

But tho' they should kill me, the Spirit of God shall not die; and Truth will always be true. For if I should not speak it, the Dead would speak, or the Stones, to declare it unto Men. And tho' these Ministers should put me to Death, God has yet more than a Hundred Millions of Persons, of whom he can serve himself, to declare the same Truths which I advance.

And therefore, my Son, I exhort you, to retain them well, and put them in Practice; for tho' I were not in the World, you must nevertheless save your own Soul, cost what it will, if you would enjoy God to all Eternity. Which she wishes you with all her Heart, who loves your Happiness,

Hufum, Feb. 5. 1674.  
*St. Vet.*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

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*The End of the First Part of the Treatise  
of Solid Vertue.*

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A N  
Admirable Treatise  
O F  
Solid Vertue.

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The Second Part.

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Which teacheth the Sure Way to Paradise, to all those who are willing to follow it, without Dissimulation, without Shew, and without Hypocrisie, leading Men straight to God, without the Interposition of Deceitful Men, who have no more but apparent Virtues, that deceive through Malice or Ignorance.

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By *ANTONIA BOURIGNON.*

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Written in Eighteen Letters, to several Persons, aspiring after true Virtue, shewing them that it consists in denying of their own will, and in the Mortification of their Corrupt Nature, and how they must pass three Bridges to come to the Heavenly Jerusalem.

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Translated out of the Original French.

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L O N D O N,  
Printed in the Year. MDCXCIX.

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THE  
P R E F A C E  
T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

I Cannot, Friendly Reader, go out of my career, nor forbear to publish the Christian truths which God communicates to me, because such is his holy will: and albeit men oppose themselves to his designs, they shall not prevail, Since the time is come that God will Spread the Light of his truth, over the whole universal world; as he hath promised, that before the end of the world, The Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached through the whole world. Which cannot be done by the mouth of the modern preachers, because they themselves are fallen from the true Light, and have no longer the Christian truths, being fallen from one error into another, insensibly by degrees, untill they have intirely forgotten God and solid Vertue, to fill themselves with imaginary fancies, building their Salvation upon a dead faith and seeming Vertues. Which is owned and followed at present by every one through an infatuation of Spirit, that hath overspread all Christendom, in which true Vertue is not

A 2 any

## The Preface.

any more known, much less will men follow it, when it discovers it self any where : On the contrary, they despise and slander it, they persecute and reproach it, seeking to put to death the persons that would declare it.

\* This I find by my own experience, for, because I have written concerning true Vertue, and my friends to whom I had directed some letters about it, have caused them to be printed, with design to communicate them to well disposed persons ; it pleased the Churchmen of Holstein, to put a stop to that so wholesome work, and necessary for the Salvation of Souls : and they prevailed with the Magistracy of that place to take away my printing press, destroy and plunder the first treatise of this Solid Vertue, by an insolent Fiscal, who threw down and gave away of this divine treatise, thro all the towns and villages where he passed, going from Husum to Sleswick, profaning them as ill things, crying with a Loud Voice, These are Heresies and Blatphemies against God, to beget an abhorrence of them in the ignorant people, who knew not the contents of that Treatise : So that thinking to stifle the truth, which God will have to be made manifest, they have made it known to a greater number, who without this insolent exploit, would never have known it. For I know that even Souldiers and Drunkards drinking in Taverns, after they had read a little of this Solid Vertue, Swore, and said or wished, the Devil might take them if there was any ill thing in these printed Sheets.

Thus it is that the Devil and the wicked beguile themselves always in the enterprises which they take in hand against the just according to that which the Prophet Esaiah hath said, speaking of the wicked to the just. No arms forged against thee shall prosper, and thou shalt put to silence every tongue that shall rise up against thee in Judgment ; this is the righteousness of the Servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me. And that we may see that this may be applied now, to those that have undertaken to make known the Christian Truths ; there needs no more but to consider the confusion which these Churchmen have received, by the Answers which I have publicly made, to their reproachful Calumnies and Slanders, which they have Printed against me ; How they are thereby refused to their sudden shame. Since all Good judicious Persons may see the great wrong, which these Preachers have done, in Persecuting and Contradicting the Truths of God, which are so clear and convincing, that both the Learned and the Ignorant may understand them, and also see by the profession of faith which I was obliged to publish, and present to the Court of God

## The Preface.

torp, for repelling the false accusations which these Preachers had made against me, at that Court, and in all other places where they would listen to them: Preaching publicly in diverse of their Churches, that, I was a wicked Heretick, more pernicious than any Heretick that ever was in Christendom, yea, worse than the Jews: Whilst all these supposed heresies, are nothing but Christian Truths and solid virtues, most proper for guiding the Souls of Men unto God, and bringing them to a blessed Eternity. Which things are very lovely in themselves, albeit the wicked will needs call them Heresies, or Blasphemies against God: This doth not move me, I'll steadfastly adhere to the truth which God teaches me, without disowning it, do my Enemies what they will; and I wish that all men of good will were filled with such holy and saving heresies, and that they would glorifie God, by the practice of the Instructions which he hath given me, albeit these Churchmen should call these glorifications, Blasphemies against God, this takes away nothing from the holiness of the thing.

Therefore, I intreat you, Friendly Reader, narrowly to examine this present treatise, which is a continuation of that which the Lutheran Preachers caused to be rifled and torn, to see if you shall meet with any ill thing there, worthy of Reprehension, or capable of being held for Errours or Blasphemies against God, according to the allegation of these ill-willers, who out of pure Passion and Spite, will speak evil of the best things, and draw Poison out of the best Physick for Souls, in calling by the name of Heresies the Christian truths which God reveals to me, and which he will have declared unto men by an instance of his last mercy.

This shall be done in despite of the envious. For since they put me out of a capacity of Printing my writings, sundry of my Friends and other good People unknown to me, have offered themselves for this work, and have even caused to Print the Touch-stone in Latine and high Dutch, and also the first Treatise of Solid Vertue in French, which is the same that was rifled and destroyed in Holstein, being Printed there, almost to the end, in high and Low Dutch, which my Friends will repair, by causing it to be Printed anew again, in both these Languages; making a Latine Version of it, that by a holy Zeal, they may overcome the Malice of those, who with so great violence, seek to hinder the truth of Solid Vertue from coming to Light. I hope, God will bless their Holy resolutions, and that they shall perfect with courage, that which I had begun for the glory of God and the salvation of Souls: And since I am rendered incapable of

## The Preface.

Printing, they will supply my defect, with the profit and advantage of the perfection of their own Souls, and of those of their Neighbours; drawing down by this imployment, the Blessing of God upon their Heads. And by this means there shall remain nothing but confusion, for the Enemies of the Truth, who thought to destroy and stifle it in its Cradle.

For as soon as the Priests of Divers Religions, had discovered that I came from God to declare his Truth unto Men, they began to contradict it, by seeking all sorts of inventions to discredit it. They said first, That I taught Heresies, Socinianism, Quakerism, or other Errours, concluding, that it belonged not to Women to teach. And when good Spirits and good Persons, had read and well examined my first Printed Writings, they found them good and Salutary, full of Christian truths, and true divine Wisdom: Whereupon my enemies said, that it was not I, who had composed them, but some Learned man, that desired by my means to Publish his thoughts. And even I knew, that a Learned Jewish Rabbi in Amsterdam, said, after he had read one of my Printed Writings, He could believe that this Book were composed by a maid, I would no longer be Jew: but I would yield my self to so Solid truths. But after that so many Persons worthy of credit, have seen and declared that it is I alone, without any man's help, that compose all my Writings, without any study, meditation and reading of any Books, or other humane means, and are Witnesses that all my knowledge is infused by the Holy Spirit, which I receive in greater abundance, when separated from men, who are but a hinderance to me: for when they would tell me, or correct any thing in my Writings, they marr them, and darken the light that inlightens my understanding; which when my enemies heard, they said, that I was a Devil, or had some magick, or a Familiar Spirit: But having observed in The Testimony of the Truth, that so many Persons of Worth and Honour, had declared, that my whole Life had been a tract of Vertues, and that I had never done things Worthy of Reprehension, or Evil, that they should be Judged to come from the Devil, since the tree is known by it's fruit, and the Devil, or the Holy Spirit, by that which they produce; tho I will not deny that I have a Familiar Spirit, which is God, with whom I converse as long as men do not distract me, or the Cares of this Life divert me from it. If they will call this Converse with God, Magick, it must be called a Holy Magick, and not diabolical, as my enemies would make it be believed: who after they had failed in so many accusations and suspicion of my Person, at last fell upon my Doctrine

## The Preface.

*Doctrine it self, saying, that it was erroneous, that by it I blasphem'd against God, I denied the Holy Trinity, and the Merits of Jesus Christ. Which, being found false, by the profession of Faith which I presented publicly at the Court of Gottorp (and which is likewise join'd herewith) they published Books against me, full of Lies and Calumnies, thinking thereby to discredit the Truth, which God communicates to me, making the common people believe, that these Truths are Lies, and this Divine Wisdom, Errours, for to affright the People, that suffer themselves to be hoodwink'd by their Preachers, and to hinder them from reading my Writings, which they thus take out of their hands, fearing, lest they should discover the deceit of their Preachers, and how they do not Preach to them the truth. For this cause alone, they have caused to be taken away my Press, without telling me the Reason thereof: Since all the accusations which these Preachers had made against me at the said Court of Gottorp, were rendered False and Calumnious, by the Answer which I have made to the book of Mr. Burchardus, Preacher in the Cathedral Church of Sleswick, which is so well refuted, that they have no more pretence to lift up their Heads, or to say and preach, that I am an Heretick, unless it be privately, to persons who are content to be deceived, and to believe a Lie from those who should preach the Truth unto them, who notwithstanding are the Enemies thereof, and persecute it, desiring to stifle it, for fear, lest it open the Eyes of Persons of Worth and Judgment.*

*Which seems to me a devilish wickedness, because human wickedness reacheth no further, than to Sloth, negligence or Frailty, in living well, and following Vertue, in keeping the commandments or counsels of the Gospel through the Love that men bear to themselves, being unable to resolve upon a way of living contrary to their corrupt nature, because they have been accusom'd to follow it, in the pleasures of this Life. But the persons who not only will not embrace true Vertue for their Eternal good, but would absolutely hinder others from embracing it also, must be of the Devil, beside their human Impiety and Frailty. For otherwise they would suffer others to follow true Vertue, tho these Preachers would not touch it with the tip of their finger. It must needs be said, that the Priests now are worse than those of the hypocritical Pharisees, because the Scripture saith expressly, That they laid so heavy burdens upon the shoulders of others, that they themselves would not touch them with the point of their finger.*



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By which it appears, that Christendom is at present more degenerate, than the Jewish Church was, at the time when Jesus Christ took our Mortality; Since the Priests then taught repentance, and held the People under discipline, albeit they would not follow the same themselves: and that Jesus Christ said then to the People, speaking concerning the Pharises, do that which they bid you, but do not that which they do: Whereas now we cannot any more do that which these Preachers say; because sitting (as they say) in Moses's chair, they do not Preach the truth any longer, and they can no more be believed than followed: and, which is worse, they will not suffer others to speak the truth, studying Night and Day to binder their people from reading books that treat of the Truth of God, and of True Vertue: For I know that sundry Preachers went to Book-fellers and other persons that had the good luck to have some of my printed Writings, and reprov'd them for reading such things; telling them that they were ill things; and that they ought neither to read them, nor have them by them: And I knew that the Pastors of Hambourg did importune the Magistrates that they would hinder my books from being sold in their Town, as if they contained ill Doctrine: the without any Complaints, they suffer profane, lewd, or ~~indecent~~ books to be sold there; and yet the Pastors do not go to the Magistrates to forbid them, or to complain of the great Disorders and Sins that are committed there. to the end some Remedy might be applied thereunto; as if these Evils did not concern them; and that they desired nothing more than to discredit the Truth of God. Which I hope they shall not do, because God is their Master, and will have these Truths now to be known through the whole World.

If this shall be done by the means of a Woman, or a Man, it is the same thing, since God can of Stones make Children to Abraham, as the Scripture speaks. The wicked cannot resist the power of God, He can do what he will, and willeth that his Light of truth be now diffused through all the world, albeit those Church-men set themselves against it, they shall not prevail: For God will give the Victory to the truth, and will confound Leasing. Since it is of this time that God saith, I will destroy the Wisdom of the Wise, abolish the Prudence of the Prudent, in which it shall be said, where is the Wiseman? where is the Scribe? For they shall be so discredited by the truth, that they shall not dare to appear any more, when they see that their deceits are discovered: They shall have no more credit

## The Preface.

credit with the People, who shall curse them because they have not taught them the truth, having amused them with discourses and reasons devised in their Schools or Colledges; where they learn to lie subtilly, to the end they may thereby have Dominion over the People. Which all men shall discover, when the truth of all things shall come to Light. This is that Holy Spirit promised by Jesus Christ to his Apostles, at the time of his assumption into heaven, he promised to send his Holy Spirit, who should teach them all truth: Which was not fulfilled in their time, since they themselves were yet Ignorant of many things, after they had received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

But this promise of Jesus Christ made to his Apostles, shall be accomplished in the last times, in which we live at present, whereof these Church-men seem to be afraid, since they are alarmed on all hands at this which I have begun to write, concerning the truth of God and Solid Vertue. This was insupportable to them, and hath disquieted them day and night, thundring against me, and my Writings, and wishing to have them burned. For a Roman Priest said in presence of one of my Friends, that he would willingly give a new years gift, to have me burnt, because of my Writings: And when my Friend asked him, if he had read them? He said, not, but that he had heard them spoken of. Another Priest of the same Religion pursued me on the way with an armed man, to cause me be shot in passing. The Calvinist Priests have caused Books to be Printed against me, in a Language that I know not, that by them, they may make me to pass for a Whore and a Witch. The Lutheran Priests have caused to seize all my Books, a great Magazine which came from Holland, worth Six Thousand Florins: And albeit the Duke of Holstein had given no order for this, and commanded since, that they should be restored to me, these Churchmen would not comply therewith; detaining them still at present in the Castle of Gottorp, as thieves detain the things they have stolen, and will not restore them. They have likewise caused intimation to be made to me by Authority, that I do not publish my Books in Holstein: as if they were Evil; and all this to hinder as far as in them lies that the truth of God be not known by the People. But they who have read my Writings, cannot but be convinced in their Conscience, that they are most true, and most convincing to draw well disposed Souls unto God. But they desire willingly to shut (the gates of) Paradise against others, and not  
to

## The Preface.

to enter therinto themselves; as the Scripture declares. Therefore they desire to stifle the truth which I propose, because it is not agreeable to their glosses and frivolous explications. They have endeavoured to have my Person banished or imprisoned, yea to burn my Books that are so saving; and the Preachers of Flensbrough have caused two or three of them to be burned, by the hand of the Hangmen, at the Market place of that Town, causing it to be proclaimed to the People, that they are Heresies and Blasphemies against God. Which cannot remain unpunished. For God cannot be mocked, and will avenge himself in his own time of the injury that is done to his Word, in rejecting it as Errors or Lies. And if these Preachers think they have disgraced my Person, by this infamous action, they deceive themselves; for I account it a great Honour to suffer Persecution for righteousness, and to see my self overwhelmed with the happiness which Jesus Christ foretold to his Apostles, saying unto them, speaking of the Pharisees, they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also: The servant is not better than his Master; adding, in patience possess your Souls; as I find it indeed: For I rejoyce when I hear, that these Preachers say my Books have been burnt at the Gallows; and I wish (if it were the will of God) that I were hanged there (my self) to the end I might the more closely follow and imitate my Saviour, who was hanged by the rage and envy of the Priests for having told them the Truth. And it can be for no other Reason, that these Lutheran Priests have burnt my Books, and wished also to burn my Person if they had had me in their Power, as they had the Books, which were more innocent than my Person that was not always faithful to it's God, as the Writings dictated by the Holy Spirit assuredly are, as these Writings were, which these Preachers caused to be burned by the Executioner. Behold how the abomination of desolation is now in the Sanctuary, and that we are arrived at the last times, of which there is no doubt to be made; since this is the mark which Jesus Christ has given, by saying, When you shall see the abomination of desolation to be in the Sanctuary, believe the time is near.

And what abomination can be more horrible than to see so many Priests and Churchmen persecute the Truth of God? We read in the Scripture that two Sorcerers called Jannes and Jambres, in the days of Moses resisted the Truth, and at present we find so many Priests that not only resist it, but also reproach it, Persecute it, and would put to Death the Person by whom the Truth is sent unto them. I wish, Friendly Reader,

you

## The Preface.

*you would not any more go near these seducers of Souls, and that you would embrace the Truth of God contained in my Writings; that you would read and read again, not only this present Treatise of Solid Vertue in its Second Part, but also, that of its first Part, which these Priests have destroyed and caused to be rifled, to the end you may seriously examin, if these Treatises contain any ill thing, and if they be not very wholesome Doctrines, for all those that will practice them, untill I shall shew you others yet more wonderful, which you may expect from her who remains,*

Friendly Reader,

Your very Affectionate

in Jesus Christ,

ANTONINETTE BOURIGNON.

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Admirable Treatise

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Solid Vertue.

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The Second Part.

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The First Letter.

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That Poverty of Spirit is necessary to  
Salvation.

*How we must pass Three Bridges, to come to the  
Heavenly Jerusalem; to wit, Forsaking of  
the World, Covetousness and Self-Will.*

*My Child,*

**I** Find it not convenient to send any more of that which you call for, into *Norstrand*, believing that there is enough of it there already; for I know not how all we have bought already, can be Employed. And I know it is your Custom always to demand things you might very well want, if you were poor in Spirit, or desirous to attain to it; which consists in resting satisfied with the least,  
and

and chusing always the lesser when we may have the greater.

It seems you understand not, what Poverty of Spirit is, or that you are not willing to practise it; for so soon as it comes in your fancy to have any thing, you call for it or buy it; and oftentimes after you have got it, you lose it, or suffer it to be spoiled. These are no other but the desires of corrupt Nature, which always covets that which it hath not, and is never satisfied with that which it hath, desiring always to have more; and he who followeth this Corruption goeth softly to Hell, because it is an enemy to Virtue, and inclines to all kind of Sins: Wherefore he that would become a true Christian, ought never to follow it, neither in little or great things, to which Jesus Christ adviseth us when he saith, *deny your self*.

Not that God stands in need of this denial, but because, we Perish in following this Corrupt Nature, which is an enemy to God, and ever more incites us to do Evil. You laid the Foundation of Virtue in your Soul, when you forsook the World, your Countrey, and your Relations, to follow Jesus Christ. But the edifice of this Virtue, must be perfected, before God take up his residence in your Soul. And as your Body could not remain in a house which had Foundations only, without any other edifice or roof; so it is with the Spiritual building of our Souls, wherein God cannot lodge, if they are not built by a Renunciation of our own will, because it is always evil, and begetteth nothing but sins, wherewith God cannot abide.

Wherefore you need not wonder, if you do not feel him acting in your Souls, according to your desires; because God cannot dwell with self-will. And albeit you feel him sometimes in Fervours and good Desires, yet this lasts not, but is quickly changed into Coldness and Evil Desires: Which Evils are engendred by self-will, which, being an Enemy to God (because it rebelled against him, as the Devil had done) is wholly perverted and corrupted, since this sin; insomuch that it can do no good, but bringeth forth all sort of evils contrary to the good Spirit of God. For this cause you ought always to suspect your own will, and never to follow it, no more in small things than in great, since God saith, *Be ye faithful in little things, and I will set you over great*.



It seemeth to you often that your own will is good, and that the thing which you desire to do, or leave undone, shall be Good. But if you knew \* the Corruption of your own will, you would follow it in nothing, no not in things that are good, in regard that the Devil and Sin may mingle themselves with the most holy things, in which we may commit the greatest faults. For this cause you ought to be Jealous of all kind of desires, be they what they will, to the end you may always contradict this self-will, which is so corrupt, that it cannot have a good thought, and leads always to evil directly or indirectly.

If you could well understand this point, and War against your own will, I should quickly see the Spirit of God revive in you, and that Jesus Christ according to his promise, would be raised up in your Soul : For his time is come wherein he will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh ; and there is nothing but your self-will that opposeth this New Birth, as do also the self-wills of other Brethren, which hindreth that the Spirit of Jesus Christ cannot revive in them, albeit they are always disengaged from many things. Which makes me often sigh, when I see that the Devil hath still so much Power over the Children of God, to make them do what he pleases by their self-wills. Wherewith he threatned me in the beginning at *Sleeswick*, saying, *They shall do my will and not yours.*

Which thing I find by Experience to be true : For albeit the Devil be the Father of lies, in this he spake truth, since how much so ever I Exhort and admonish, they always fulfill the will of the Devil, against the inward bent † of their wills and mine, which I must feel with regret, without being able to help it.

So long as they follow their own wills, God shall never have the Dominion over their Souls : Because God having Created them free, he cannot force them, for to come and dwell in their Souls, unless man of his free choice, shall render up to God that free will, which God gave him when he Created him : And that renouncing self will, he submit his will in all things to the will of God, suffering himself to be Governed and Guided in all things by that Divine will, which evermore willeth our greatest

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\* *That our own will is always Evil.*

† *Or fund.*

good, and cannot will but things that are good for our Spiritual and Temporal advantage.

In which man is an Enemy to himself, that he does not submit himself, but Loves rather to follow his own depraved and corrupt will, the which maketh him to fall into all sorts of mischiefs, as I believe, my Children, ye have sufficiently experienced to your loss: For all the faults which you have committed, have proceeded from your self will in following whereof you can never do well. How many Spiritual and Temporal losses, have ye procured, by following your own wills? They are almost innumerable. And if you observe narrowly, you shall find that you never did evil in following my will, which is no other but the Will of God that can never do Evil. Wherefore you ought to make no difficulty to submit your self willingly thereunto, since it is good and profitable for your Eternal Salvation, and will also bring you peace and quiet of Conscience: Which things you cannot have in following your own will, which begets regret and displeasure, after that a Man hath followed his own will, which is insatiable and can never satisfy our Souls, but still makes them more thirsty: For he who studieth to follow his own will, is never contented, because our own will being altogether corrupt causeth displeasure in those very things which we have most desired.

And a Person can never be without displeasure, for having followed his own will; when we consider the evil which that self-will procureth to us. For Life and Death depend upon our own will, seeing that in resigning it to the Will of God, we shall live Eternally, and in following it for our own satisfaction, we shall dye Eternally. And this is the *Fire and the Water*, in the midst of which Man is placed. And he may turn himself to what side he will, and no body can constrain him: For he is free to follow his own will: as he is also free to resign that will of his unto the Will of God.

And therefore, my Children, ye must resolve to choose the one or the other, Life or Death. For ye must not deceive your selves: No Body shall attain to Life Eternal by following his own Will; and no body can ever be Damned in submitting the same to the Will of God. I know very well, ye will all say to me with your mouths, that ye will submit your Wills to that of God, whilst in effect, ye do not submit it upon occasion, and your own wills are always followed,

Let. I. *is necessary to Salvation.* 5

lowed, maintained, and defended, as if they were good, tho they be always Evil.

For my own part, I dare never follow my own will in any thing, because I find it to be corrupt : And I am sure it can only do evil, that it is an Enemy to God and contrary to the Love of my Neighbours. And therefore, I evermore suspect that which cometh of my self-love, and dare never Execute the motions of self-love, albeit the things it proposes to me be good, and seem to me to be perfect, yea, saving : I would not for all that follow or put them in practice, before I had recommended them unto God, and Learned from him, if the motions of my own will, be conformable to the Will of God, and then I freely put them in Execution : But I desist from them, when I do not understand that God confirms them.

And if I be so afraid to follow my own will, after that God has given me Light and Understanding, to discern aright between Good and Evil ; How much more ought you to suspect your own will, that you may not follow it ? Whilst you see, that you have not Light enough to discern aright ; and that on the contrary, you find by daily Experience, that you have committed so many faults by following your own will. This ought to make you wise upon your cost, not to follow any more this perverse will, so much the Enemy of God, and of your Eternal happiness. Wherefore you ought to hate it, and deny all it's askings, if you would be Saved.

For, to come to our Eternal Salvation, we must of Necessity pass *three Bridges*, before we can enter into the Heavenly *Jerusalem*. The first Bridge is to *forsake the World and retire from the dangers of sin*. The Second Bridge is, to *forsake riches and worldly pleasures, and to covet nothing in this world*. The third Bridge is, to *renounce our own will, that we may suffer our selves to be intirely Guided and Governed by the good will of God*. And no Body shall ever attain to Life Eternal, without having passed these three Bridges : In doing whereof, we meet with Impediments and powerful Enemies in our passage.

\* For to forsake the world, one must become its Enemy, in respect that those of the world, Love only such as are like themselves, and hate all those who will not follow them.

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\* That we must abandon the World for to become true Christians.

So that our nearest Relations and friends, become our Enemies, when they see that they cannot draw honours, pleasures and profit from us any more, if we forsake them. Wherefore they strive with all their might, to hinder us from Leaving the world, and passing this first bridge, which must be past for to arrive at Eternal Life. Whereof Jesus Christ warned us, saying, *If ye are of the world, the world will Love you, and if ye be of me, the world will hate you.* And elsewhere he saith, speaking of his friends: *Those of a mans house, shall be his Enemies.*

Behold the reason why men find so great difficulty in passing this first Bridge, for to come to Life Eternal. For when a Person goeth about to leave the World, he is infallibly engaged in that War, which Jesus Christ saith that he came to bring upon Earth; since albeit he is a God of Peace, he himself saith, to teach Men the true way of salvation: *I am not come to bring Peace upon Earth, but war, even war betwixt the Father and the Children, the Daughter and the Mother, &c.* because Jesus Christ knew very well, that the world Loveth only it's own; and that those who are his, shall be hated, pursued, and Persecuted, of Father, Mother, Wife, Children, Brothers, Sisters and of all worldly Relations, for Christ's sake. Wherefore he saith, *He that Loveth Father or Mother; &c. more than me, is not worthy of me.* For to be worthy of him, then, we must forsake Father, Mother, Sister, Wife, Children, and all things, when those are hindrances to us in following Jesus Christ, because they are stones of stumbling, in the way of Vertue: which Relations God adviseth us by David to forsake, when he saith, *Hearken my Daughter and incline thine Ear: forget thy Country, thy Parentage and thy Father's House, for the King hath greatly desired thy beauty.* God speaketh thus to the Souls which desire to enter in, and dwell with him, in the Heavenly Jerusalem, shewing them this first bridge, which they must pass for to come to the true way, that leads to this Jerusalem.

Love

For without forsaking the world, a man cannot become the true disciple of Jesus Christ, who hath said, *I am not of the World;* and to his Disciples, *ye are not of the World;* *If you were of the World, the World would love you.* Further, *the servant is not better than the Master;* *if they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also.* Behold the reason why we must absolutely forsake the World; when we would travel towards the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is our true Country: because the World is an Impediment to the Perfection of

of our Souls ; and that there are in it at present, so many dangers of defiling our selves with the sins of others, as well as our own. For we see no other thing prevailing therein, but Sin, Fraud, Lying, Cheating, Robbery, Treachery, the Pride of Life, the Lust of the Eyes and the Lust of the Flesh.

And albeit, my Children, ye would abhor such gross and manifest sins, so as not to commit them, yet ye cannot shun to defile your Souls by the sins of others, into which ye may fall Nine Ways, elsewhere particularly described unto you: as by consenting to sin, by flattering or praising it, by tolerating it, by not hindering it, &c. For ye see by experience, that we scarcely buy a Morfel of Bread, which is not defiled with the sin of Covetousness, or Fraud in the Seller . and when ye buy from him, you co-operate with his Fraud or his Avarice : unless necessity force you to buy from that covetous or deceitful Person, ye cannot buy of him without defiling your Soul with his sins : for ye not only tolerate, but also co-operate with his sins, and Minister Food to his Covetousness and his Fraud by giving him gain.

Wherefore ye must flee from all these occasions, by forsaking the World, for to avoid it's Perils and Dangers ; to the End we may be able freely to walk in the right Way that leads to Salvation, without being hindered by any Body, or running the Hazard of being misled by so many crooked Ways, in which so many do walk, who shall never arrive at the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, wherein I hope to find all my Children, if they will follow my Instructions.

\* I know well that ye with some others, have already past this first Bridge, by forsaking the World, your Relations and Friends, your *Countrey* and your Father's House, which thing makes you happy in having laid the first stones of the Foundation of the Building of the Perfection of your Souls. But ye must not stop at these Foundations, but endeavour to advance this Spiritual Building, by forsaking all sorts of Covetousness of Temporal things. For if ye shall stand still, believing that ye have done enough in forsaking the World, ye shall never come to your Heavenly Countrey. Ye must proceed farther, and pass the other Bridges, before ye can arrive at the Heavenly *Jerusalem*. For if ye abide in the Way, ye shall never come to the End, nor to the safe Port of your Salvation.

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\* That to be born again we must forsake all Covetousness.

Wherefore ye must also pass the Bridge of the Covetousnesses of the Earth, and never more care or Labour, for acquiring Honour, Pleasure or Profit, of the good things of this World; but content your self, with pure Necessity, without ever desiring any more. Which thing I know ye have promised to God, not to Labour or Trade any more for acquiring the Riches of this World. Whereby ye have almost also past the Second Bridge. For your Eye doth not any more behold the Riches of this World to cover them, albeit ye are not altogether free from Covetousness, seeing as yet ye covet many things for your conveniency, albeit St. Paul saith, that *all sorts of Covetousness are sins*, so that ye are upon this Second Bridge, of forsaking all Covetousness of earthly things.

But ye have not wholly passed it, as yet, forasmuch as ye have not discovered that there is yet a Third Bridge to be passed, before ye arrive at the Holy City of the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, which is to forsake your own will: which is the last pass, after which there is nothing but Pleasure in the Way of Vertue, which is strewed with Roses (without Thorns) and sweet smelling Flowers, which afford Joy and Rest of Soul to him, who hath forsaken his own will.

For this cause, my Children, ye must use more Diligence to pass this Bridge of the forsaking your own wills, than ye have done for passing the other two Bridges, which consisted only in things without you, whereas your own will is within you, and is therefore harder to be overcome than is the World, and the covering of earthly good things, which do not cleave to our Souls or our Bodies, but are only means, whereby we give some Satisfaction to our corrupt Nature.

For the World, our Friends, our Countrey and all that which we love upon Earth, cannot make our Soul happy, but only give some Satisfaction to our corrupt Nature. But the denying of our own will, bringeth to the Soul Vertues, Peace of Conscience, Peace with our Neighbour, and finally replenisheth our Soul and our Body with happiness.

\* Wherefore, we ought to value this abandoning of our own will, more than all the treasures of the Spiritual and Temporal Life, seeing this is the end and accomplishment of all perfection, which consists, in the resignation of our own will to that of God. Wherein is contained all the Law and

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\* That it is necessary to deny our own will.

the Prophets, and all that which God ever required or can require of man, who hath nothing to give unto God except his own will, which being left free to him, man can dispose of, at his Pleasure, and if he will yeild it up to God, he shall assuredly come to the Heavenly *Jerusalem*: But if man will needs retain his own will, and use it for his own satisfaction, he's out of the way of salvation, and must certainly perish, if he do not turn back from this way of corruption. For our own Will being corrupt, begetteth Eternal Death.

Methinks you'll tremble, when you hear this Truth, and that you'll fear, you shall not be able to pass this Third Bridge, *of the renouncing of your own Will*; and that some despairing Thought about it will come into your mind; because the old habit of following your own will, is so rooted, that it will seem impossible for you thus to abandon your own will: But these fears proceed only from Pusillanimity, and Weakness of Spirit; as Children are afraid of a Vizard, which seemeth fearful to them, albeit the person who wears it, be under this Mask, beautiful, agreeable, and well-beloved of the Child, who is only affrighted with the false Face, because it does not discover that it is its Mother, or Nurse, that is so masked. Just so doth a Christian, when he is affrighted to hear that he must pass these Three Bridges to come to Life Eternal; because in effect all these things are most beautiful to be kept by a Soul which hath truly resolved to enter into the *Heavenly Jerusalem*.

\* Seeing that in effect it will be obliged to acknowledg, *That it is better to forsake the world than to converse with men so corrupt as they are at present.* For it must be confessed, if we will speak the Truth, That the Laws of the World are more severe and difficult to be kept than the Law of Jesus Christ. For what Cares hath not a person who is under the Laws of this World, to preserve his honour and reputation? to save his Riches for maintaining himself? What Endeavours useth he to make himself be loved and esteem'd? How many sundry Suites for to appear Honourable? How much Furniture to appear well accommodated? How many persons to serve him, to

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\* *That the Law of Jesus Christ is more easy than that of the world.*



whom he must give much Wages, for to have their Service and their Love? And after all is done, finds to his grief, that they seek their own Accommodations and Interests, more than the Pleasure or profit of their Master: so that the Servant is oftentimes happier than the Master, since the Servant eats and drinks without care, and receives his Wages without trouble: Whereas the Master is continually busied for getting wherewith to maintain his Family. So that the Service of the World is painful and laborious, and makes them all Slaves who are brought under its Laws.

But the Law of Jesus Christ, makes a person altogether free, without Humane Respects, and without the care of displeasing Men, whilst he seeketh no other Glory, but that of being the Servant of God; and no other Riches but those of True Vertue, contenting himself with what is simply necessary for his body, without wishing for any more: and so he is always content and satisfied. For in the Service of God, men fear nothing but the Reproofs of God, and do not fear the Judgments or Censures of men, but content themselves with the Testimny of their own Conscience, despising the Maxims of the World, being willing to do nothing to please it, or to be loved and esteemed by it; always preserving their Liberty, without depending on the Passions of others. And the Law of Jesus Christ esteems it an Happiness for one to be able to serve himself, and not to be subjected to any person for to be served: perceiving that the Master is more obliged to serve, than the Servant, seeing he must care and take pains for the maintaining of his Servant, that he may want nothing; whilst he doth not render to his Master those Faithful Services he is obliged to: On the contrary, often gives him Trouble, Disquiet and Displeasure, instead of Obsequiousness. But he who serves himself is always served to his contentment, and hath no ground of Displeasure against his Servants, who ordinarily serve more according to their own Fancy, than according to the appointment and will of their Masters.

So that according to Nature it self, we find it most true, *That the Love of the World is much more troublesome and difficult than the Love of Jesus Christ*; which gives nothing to the Soul but Peace and Rest, Assurance of Conscience, and is the Pledge of Eternal Life: For he who hath kept the Law of Jesus Christ in this World, shall certainly

ly go into Glory. Whereas the Law of the World can give nothing but misery and trouble in this World, and Eternal Damnation. For it is written, *The World shall perish with the Lust thereof.* And all Christians promise in Baptism to renounce the World and its Poms; which they cannot follow without breaking their Faith promised to God in Baptism.

Wherefore we ought not to find so many difficulties to forsake the World, since this is good and saving; and Jesus Christ saith, That *his Yoke is easy and his Burden is light.* And to encourage Christians, he himself despised the World, with its Riches and Pleasures, saying, That *he came not to be served, but to serve.* And no body can doubt but Jesus Christ chused that which was best and most perfect: and consequently that there can be nothing more perfect, than the keeping of his Law: And that he who would be his Disciple, ought not to be afraid to pass these Three Bridges which I have marked here, but Courageously to advance always towards the Holy City, which leads unto Life Eternal, without suffering themselves to be disheartned by Childish Fancies or Fears, which do not belong but to Weak Spirits, that have not the Force to penetrate into the Truth of Things, but suffer themselves to be frighted with the dreadful Vizard which the Devil and corrupt Nature put upon Vertue, to make men afraid to embrace it, and to terrify them from passing these Three so necessary Bridges, without passing of which no body shall come to the *Heavenly Jerusalem.*

For he who doth not forsake the World, cannot follow Jesus Christ, who is not of the World. And he who yet desireth the Riches of the World, is not poor in Spirit. For, Jesus Christ saith, That *he who forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be his Disciple.* And this Impossibility of being the Disciple of Jesus Christ, excludeth from Eternal Blessedness: Since no body shall enter into the *Heavenly Jerusalem, except the Disciples of Jesus Christ.*

\* And therefore, we must of necessity pass this Second Bridge, of *forsaking all covetous Desires of the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this World:* Which is also very easy to be done by him who hath forsaken the World, and

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\* That we ought to content our selves with necessary things.

passed the first Bridge. For ordinarily men covet Riches, rather that they may appear in the World, than for to work out their Salvation, by means thereof. And men trade and traffick, to gain Money, to the end they may be Richly Cloathed, and have a Table well furnished with delicious Meats, to shew their Glory and Abundance: But he who despiseth the World, despiseth all these Things, and contenteth himself with pure Necessity, without desiring any thing more. For then he hath no more need of Rich Cloaths, or Sumptuous Furniture, no more than of superfluous Dishes, to shew the Esteem of his Person, in respect that all this doth then cease, when a Person is not any longer willing to please the World, or to be esteemed by it.

I know well, my Child, that you do not covet to gain money to make your self be honoured and esteemed of the World; but you are not yet free of all sort of Covetousness: for you often desire that which you have not, and was never yet entirely contented and satisfied, but always desiring some other thing than you have; albeit, that which you have, be more than sufficient for Necessity. But beside Necessity, you desire still many things which might well be dispensed with; wherein consists the sin of Covetousness. For a Christian may well desire things Necessary, and albeit he should not desire them, God would always give them to him, insomuch that he ought not to care for to morrow, seeing this is forbidden by Jesus Christ, who saith, *Be not careful of to morrow; and, the birds of the air, which neither sow nor reap, find their Necessities, and ye are of more value than these Sparrows.* And when you hear Jesus Christ reason after this manner, ought ye not to be content and to rely upon his promises, without coveting that which is not Necessary? as it falls out but too often, through this Spirit of Covetousness, which is so rooted in the bottom of the hearts of all the Men of the World; seeing every one is born with this Covetousness, when he cometh into the World, because of the sin of *Adam*.

For God having created Man Lord and Ruler over all earthly things, he possessed and had in his power all that which was created for him: And this Dominion was Natural to him as a Gift of God, given him in property, which could not be taken from him, nor called in question. But since that Man hath disobeyed his God, and forsaken his Lord, he hath lost all these Prerogatives, and the Right

of ruling over all these things, being himself brought in subjection, under all these things over which he ought to rule. For all the Elements Tyrannise over Man now: the Fire burns him, the Water drowns him, the Air infects him, the Earth brings him forth Thorns, the Beasts, for the most part, bite, strike and kill him. So that man by sin is become so miserable, that all things hurt him, as every own knows by experience. In the mean while man retains in himself this desire of ruling, and having always for his use things good and beautiful, in great abundance, because he had this in perfection, at the time of his creation, and enjoyed it, untill the time of his sin.

Hence it is, that he hath yet in himself this Ambition and desire of Possessing, of Ruling, and of Subjecting all things under him. But he hath not this in his power, seeing all things less than he, Rule over him: and that man is in many things less than a Beast: and albeit he always covets, and strives as much as he can, to have things beautiful and good; yea, although he should have them in abundance, yet he's never content, nor fully satisfied, and wisheth always that which he hath not: For we often see, that those who are Richest desire most; and that those who have most, are most covetous. This proceeds from hence, *That the Soul of Adam being Divine, cannot be satisfied with any thing but God himself.* And albeit Man had still at present the Dominion over all things, as beautiful, good and perfect, as he had before his sin, he would not for this be content or satisfied, in respect *that no Created Thing, can content or satisfy him*; but remain always thirsting after his God, who alone can satisfy him.

For, Man may well be amused by divers Earthly Things, but he can never be satisfied or filled therewith, in regard that all these Things are without Man, and can only flatter his Senses; but God being in the Centre of the Soul of Man, is alone able to satisfy and fill him; because our Soul is a Vessel capable of God, nothing but he can fill or content it. Behold the Reason why all the Men of the world are in Covetousness, because they cannot be filled with all things which they covet; and the more they have of them, the more insatiably do they desire them; because all these earthly things are not suitable nourishment to satisfy our Souls. They must be fed with God himself, or they can never be content. Whence we may under-

understand, that a Person can never be content and satisfied with the things which he covets in this World; and that by consequence, of necessity, he must always covet some other thing than he possesseth, and that he is insatiable until he have found God, and possess all things in him; seeing without him, he hath nothing, and in him consisteth all good.

Wherefore, my Child, think it not strange, that you always covet some other thing than that which you have, because this Covetousness is rooted in the nature of all Men who are come out of *Adam* since his Sin; and those who do not believe this, deceive themselves; for there is nothing more deceitful than the Heart of Man, (which to flatter it self) will needs still imagine, that it is not Proud, Covetous, infected with other Sins, albeit it be born in all kind of Sin, and inclined to all sort of evil. And therefore no Person can be delivered from his Covetousness, except those who have overcome corrupt Nature; the which you have not done as yet, my Child: For as yet you do but too much follow the inclinations of this Corruption, and you often covet that which you have not, albeit you might well subsist with that which you have.

And if you had taken in hand to follow *True Vertue*, you would never desire but *things necessary*; and when the will of doing, of saying, or of coveting any thing taketh you, you ought to stop the Course of these Desires, and maturely to consider, if that which you covet, be *saving*, or *necessary for the Entertainment of this Life*. And when you do not judge your Desires saving or necessary, you ought not to follow them, but assuredly to believe, that this coveting which you have is vicious, whereof *St. Paul* hath said, *that all Concupiscence is evil*. And therefore you ought to resist it, and not to follow it.

For Example: If you be at Table to take your Refreshment, and there ariseth in you a desire to eat some other thing than what is set before you, this is a *sinful coveting*: When the Victuals which you have, are sufficient to nourish your Body, you must be content, without wishing for those which would please your Taste better; for otherwise you'll fall into the sin of *Gluttony*, besides that of *Covetousness*, and will follow the corruption of your vicious Nature. And if you have a House that can shelter you from Rain and Winds, and may live there in Health, you do very ill to covet another more Beautiful or Greater;  
seeing

seeing necessity should suffice a Christian, and he ought never to desire more: Albeit he could have it, he should despise it, because that Jesus Christ his Master, the greatest among Men, *did always chuse the least and most despised.* And if you have a Suit which preserves you from Cold, and doth honestly cover your Body, it ought to suffice you, and you ought not to desire another, albeit you could easily have it, for this would be a sinful Covetousness, or a piece of Pride, in desiring to appear Fine before Men: Wherefore you should never desire other Linnen, other Cloaths, other Shooes, or any other new thing, so long as your own may be amended and serve your need, if you would become a *True Christian*, and abide in the Grace of God; seeing all sorts of *Covetousness* are Sins, and Sin makes a Man God's Enemy.

Which thing ought to hinder *Covetousness*, and induce all men of good will to pass this Second Bridge of *forsaking all sort of Covetousness, for to come to the Heavenly Jerusalem*: For so long as Covetousness remaineth in the Soul, the Love of God cannot abide there; seeing the Scripture saith, *Where your heart is, there is your treasure.* And if your affections be yet set on coveting drink, meat, apparel, lying well, and good Furniture, or other Transitory things of this World; these things are *the Treasures* which you have chosen, and you ought to expect none in Heaven: since *your Heart is yet on the Earth*, by consequence, *your Treasure is there also*, as saith the Scripture.

But you who have undertaken a Journey, to arrive at the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, pass this Second Bringe of *coveting Earthly and Transitory things*, or otherwise you shall never come thither, and shall remain in the Way, without coming to the End, for which you have forsaken the World, and resolutely past that first Bridge, with others of our brethren, who walk with you upon this Second Bridge, *to forsake the Covetousness of Earthly things.* Some are further advanced in this passage than others, but none have yet arriv'd at the End of this Bridge, since every one of them as yet doth covet something, and are not intirely satisfied with that which they have, albeit God gives us things that are Necessary, yea, and sometimes in abundance. But so long as we shall follow corrupt Natnre, it cannot be contented; and will be always wishing for that which it hath not, in small things or in great; the matter maketh it no difference in the Sin: for a man may have as much Covetousness

tousness in a pair of shoes, as in a tun of Gold, when the heart and affection goes out as much after the one as the other.

The only remedy for this evil is to *covet nothing, and to be always content with that which God giveth* : if he send abundance, we ought to bless him for it, and use it well ; and if he give little, we ought to be as well satisfied with this Little, as with much. And this is the true way of being happy and content in this World, and of coming also to the *Heavenly Jerusalem*, for to enjoy Eternal happiness for ever. But on the contrary ; the Covetousness of this World makes us miserable, and is the cause that we are never content or at rest.

For he that loveth Riches, will still thirst the more after them, and never be satisfied : and he that coveteth the Pleasures of the Taste, will evermore be discontented, and will always find his Meat and Drink too sweet, or too sharp : And if at sometimes he meet with any that pleases him, he'll take so great a quantity of them, that they will endanger his Health. How many Displeasures hath a Person, who desires to be apparelled according to the Fashion, when he sees another finer or more modish than himself ? How much Money must he gain for to maintain the Glory which he pretends to, by following the *Pomp of the World* ? And how much Care and Trouble hath he, who loves to have a brave House, and good Furniture, which must be always Maintained, Cleansed and Adorned ? What Care must a Person take, to preserve his fine Cloaths and Linen, that they be not spoiled, nor eaten by Moths ? he needs almost take no other work in hand, but to fold them well, to rub them, brush them, air them, and fold them up again. So that he who hath abundance of necessary things, hath a great Burthen to bear in this World, and deprives himself thereby of *Eternal Glory*, for a small *Temporal Glory*, founded upon the wind of Praise and of Vanity.

In which a Man commits a great Folly, to glory in his Apparel, which should be matter of Shame to him ; for Man ought to be ashamed of his Sin, which hath obliged him to cover his Body with Skins, Linen, or the work of Beasts : He who before his Fall *was clothed with Light and Glory*, without having need of any other Covering. And Sin alone hath forced him to cover his Body, for to defend it from Heat and Cold, unto which Intemperance he



he was not subject before his Sin: But instead of being ashamed to see himself by his Sin, made subject to Heat and Cold, and so many Miseries which oblige him to cover his Body, he glories in his Cloaths. It's all one, as if a Slave or Prisoner did glory in his Chains and Cords, or would have the dark Dungeon wherein he is imprisoned; adorned and hung with Cloth of Gold, or would have fine fashionable Cloaths, and well made Shoes, to walk up and down in an obscure Prison, where the Light never enters. Men would undoubtedly say, that this Prisoner were a Fool, and out of his Wits.

But a Christian committeth a far greater folly in coveting the Riches, Honour and Pleasures of this world, into which he is sent, as into a place of Banishment, for the punishment of his Crimes; from which Banishment he shall never be delivered, until he have satisfied for them. For the *Justice of God* will never permit that any Evils remain without Punishment; nor any Good without a Recompence. And since that Sin hath made Man so miserable, it is necessary that he bear his Miseries, if he will recover the favour of his God, without rebelling against his Divine Justice, by seeking to have his Eases, Conveniences and Pleasures, in a *Place of Penitence*, and in a *Time of Suffering*, such as this short Life is, which is but a Temporal Banishment, whereunto having satisfied, we shall return unto our true *Heavenly and Eternal Country*.

But if we will not indure this Banishment, and that contrary to the Ordinance of God, we will needs return unto the delights which we have lost by our Sins; we commit the Crime of *Lease-Majesty* against God: Even as if a Guilty Person were Banished for some Years out of the Kingdom for his Misdemeanours, and that not being willing to endure this Exile, he should return against the Ordinance and Banishment of the King into his Kingdom; this guilty Person would deserve Death, or at least greater Punishments than his first Banishment, for having despised the Ordinance of his King, besides his other Crimes: And this last Fault would be greater than all the rest, as being the Crime of *Lease-Majesty*. And this is truly what a Christian commits, when he will take his Delights, and his Ease, and his Pleasures in this World, and coveteth all that's most Beautiful and Best; whereas he ought not to love, or wish for any thing but his Miseries for to satisfy Divine Justice.

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And he ought to judge himself unworthy to have Necessary things, because of so great a number of Sins which he hath committed against God, which Sins have made him unworthy to have the covering of a Roof or a Garment, and even to have a Morsel of Bread, seeing he hath so much offended the Creator of all things. And Man ought to hold himself unworthy to enjoy the least Benefit from such a Creator. But instead of acknowledging his Fault, and humbling himself under the Penitence enjoyn'd him, by accepting this Banishment willingly, and esteeming it too light for punishing the least of his Faults, he shunneth to suffer it, and wisheth always to return into the Place of Pleasure from which he was Banished for his Evil Deeds; and striveth all he can to shake off Penance, and to take as much Ease and Pleasure as he may, in his Prison, and this Place of his Banishment: Thus despising the Decrees of God, who hath sent Man into this miserable Life, for to purge away his Sin by Repentance, and this by the great Mercy of God: Seeing that Man had serv'd Hell by his first Sin, and Eternal Damnation should have happened to him, if God had used the Rigour of his Justice. For what greater Evil could Man do, than to withdraw his Affection from such a Benefactor, who had given him Being, and all things, to the end he might be loved by his Creature? Whilst it withdraws its Love from its God, for to place it upon itself, and other Creatures. This Fault is greater, than are all the Punishments of Hell for to punish it. Howbeit the goodness of God was so great towards Man, that he ordain'd him only a small time of Penitence, in this short Life, which being ended, God promiseth to restore to Man, the same Delights which he had lost by his Sin. For *God can never repent him of having created Man*, so Noble and so Perfect, and of having given him all inferior things for his delight and pleasure: For he hath reserved them for those Persons who after having satisfied their Penitence in this World, shall return unto the first Delights which God created for them.

Which thing may well make a Christian resolve to embrace this Repentance, and to deprive himself willingly, of the eases and pleasures of this Life, that he may look for them after his death, at which commenceth his happiness and all sorts of delights, which he may enjoy in abundance, without any danger of sin; seeing God permitteth man there,

there, to take all sort of good things, joys and contentments which man may lawfully take, in praising him for so many favours, shewed to man, who shall receive *all delights with continual thanksgiving to the Lord*, who hath created them to give contentment unto man: for which he shall be in continual joy, in tasting these delights with giving of thanks to his God, as he shall do *to all Eternity*. But if man should take the same delights in this World, it would be only for his own Satisfaction, and not to Praise God for them.

For the delights which men take in this World, of what Nature soever they be, do not serve to praise or glorifie God, but rather to offend and despise him. For these delights are received by self love, man esteeming himself to be worthy of and to deserve the best and most beautifull things: whereas, if his eyes were open, he would see that he had deserved nothing but Hell and Eternal Damnation, by this *first Sin*, and doth yet deserve it daily more, by *his actual and continual sins*. For he doth not follow so much as *one motion of his own will, without committing a sin*; because that this *self-will is corrupted, and all that proceedeth from it, is evil*. Wherefore that Person that would live Eternally happy ought in every thing to contradict his own will, and to desire nothing that's beautiful and good for it, since it is not permitted to us to take any delight or Pleasure, in this World, for to satisfy our selves, because this is to turn our selves away from God, whom alone we ought to love.

Wherein we are faulty, so long as we love our selves: And a Person liveth in the Love of himself, so long as he coveteth that which he hath not, of Temporal things; the want of which brings more Glory to God, than the enjoyment of them. In respect that Nature is so corrupt, that it cannot possess any abundance without abusing it, by ascribing the Glory, and deserving of that abundance to it self; instead of ascribing all this to God, to whom all Glory belongs. So that a Person who liveth yet according to corrupt Nature, robbeth God of his Honour in every thing, and ascribeth Honour to himself: Which greatly offendeth God, and maketh that he cannot give to Men that which is most beautiful and best, but that they will turn themselves away from his Love, to cleave to that which they esteem Beautiful and Good.

So that the Person that wisheth nothing, is much happier, than he who can have much: And so much the rather, that it is a certain Rule, that the more a Person shall content himself with little, the more closely shall he follow *Jesus Christ*; and he who would have more, shall follow him at a greater distance. Chuse you, my Children, what you will Love most, and if you Love to follow *Jesus Christ* closely, chuse always the Least of these things that serve for your use. Never take the Best, albeit you might easily have it; for he who taketh the Least, because he cannot have that which is better, is a *Slave that followeth Jesus Christ by constraint*. But be ye *Lawful Children of Jesus Christ*, and follow him in his Abasement willingly and joyfully, and you shall find rest to your Souls; by feeling joy in them, for having passed this *Second Bridge of Covetousness*, tor to advance you toward the *Heavenly Jerusalem*; and go on to the *Third*, which is, *To renounce your own Will*.

This *Bridge* is the last Pass which must be passed, to come to a *Blessed and Eternal Life*, where we shall find all sorts of Felicity; for enjoying whereof, we may well deprive our selves of the Delights of this Miserable Life, which are so base and imperfect, that they deserve not to be called *Delights* or *Pleasures*: Besides, that they are of so short a continuance, and that one Moment of these Pleasures, begetteth a Years Trouble. Suffer then, my Child, some little Inconveniences in this World, and do not wish to be delivered from them; for *Eternal Joy* is well worth this small pittance of Sufferings. Advance always towards the *Heavenly Jerusalem*: You are almost half way, fear not to pass the rest, for the way that remains, is better than that which you have already past. And it behoveth you to do more violence to your selves for to leave the World and Covetousness, than will be necessary at present for to leave your own Will, because there are not any more, so many Bonds to keep you back, as these which withheld you at the beginning; and that in the renouncing of your own Will, ye will not find so many Visible Enemies to divert you, if you have a strong Resolution about it, and an absolute and effectual Desire to enter into the *Heavenly Jerusalem*.

For albeit the renouncing of your own Will, be the most difficult, and the thing which touches you nearest  
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and most sensibly ; yet \* it is the most easie to him who hath past the *Two First Bridges*, of forsaking the World and Covetousness : Because these *Two First Bridges*, make a Person easily come to the *Third* ; which is, to forsake his own Will. For so long as a Person seeketh to please the World, he hath the Will to be Honoured and Served, and to have all that may minister to Vanity ; he hath a Will to be in Company, to be well Cloathed, to have a well Covered Table, and is not willing in any thing to be inferiour to any other. He desires Offices or Trading to gain Money, and a Thousand other things which belong to the Vanities of the World : so that a Person who is yet engaged in the World, cannot forsake his own Will, without doing a great Violence to himself : And it would be much more easie for him, to forsake the World it self, than to forsake Worldly Desires, or to do mean Actions against his own Will, which desireth always to Appear, and to be Esteemed, so long as it converses with the World.

But the Person who absolutely forsakes the World, and hath no more a Desire to follow his own Will in all those things, will easily submit his Will, in relation to all these Worldly Honours and Desires. And when a Person hath forsaken the Covetousness of the Good things of this World, he will easily submit his Will, in the Desires of having Money, Furniture and Cloaths, or any other Commodious thing. For having passed the *Bridge of Covetousness*, he will content himself always with Necessity ; and his own Will will not be carried any more after Superfluous things ; but will submit to that which it hath of these things, because it is resolved not to Covet any thing any more. Behold why this *Bridge of Renouncing our own Will*, is more easie to pass than are the other Two. For them who have already passed the Two former, seeing by renouncing the World and Covetousness, they have already submitted their own Wills in Principal things ; and there remains nothing, but to submit it in little things.

Which is very easie, when a Person hath overcome Great ones, and is resolved to Resign his own Will to

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\* *That it is easie and pleasant to Deny our own Will.*

the VWill of God, in every thing. For Men do not say that they find any difficulty in submitting their own VWill in small Matters, seeing these cannot bring any prejudice along with them, nor do hurt to the Body or the Soul. For if you desire to have a black Sute, and they will give you one of another Colour against your VWill, this cannot prejudice your Health, and the Grey will cover your Body, and preserve it from the Injury of the Weather, as well as the Black which you desire, and sometimes better. And if your will be carried to eat some Dainty Meat, and they shall give you that which is Course, your Health will not be concerned therein: For Gross Meats render the Body more Strong, Robust and Healthful. In like manner, if you desire a great Chamber or House, and they shall give you a little one; you will have no less in this, but much Advantage; because a little Chamber or House, may be more easily maintained, and kept clean than a great one, upon which you would bestow much more time, and be at more Pains and Trouble, to keep it in order.

So that you ought not to find Difficulty in submitting your own Will, and passing this *Third Bridge*, of which I have said, that it is strewed with Roses, and sweet Smelling Flowers; because nothing is more Sweet and Easie, than to be able to submit our own Will to a Person that is conducted by God, as you may do to your Comfort. For you may be well assured, that I'll never require any thing of any Person, but that which is Good, and that I seek not my own Interest in any thing, but always the *Spiritual and Temporal Good and Advantage* of him to whom I give Counsel.

VVhich ought to sweeten the Obedience that shall be given me, for I gain nothing by giving good Counsel, and pretend not to subject under me any Humane Creature, except for their own Good; seeing I seek nothing in this VVorld, and have no need for my self, neither of Care, nor of Labour, nor of Money, nor of Services, since God hath placed all these things in me, and that I can sufficiently serve my self, without depending on any other: And if I seek for Land, it is to give my Children Labour and Nourishment. For they cannot live

Idle,

Idle, nor yet without being nourished Bodily as well as Spiritually.

For this cause it is, that I Speak and Write continually of *Vertue* and *Christian Perfection*, to give Nourishment to their Souls : For as concerning my Self, I have no need of Lands or Houses ; a Little Chamber of Ten Foot Length sufficeth me for all the days of my Life, albeir I should never go out of it: And for Cloaths and Food, I have more of them than is Sufficient, without pretending to any thing from others. I have no need to Speak or Write of Vertue, for to nourish my own Soul, in respect it is all filled with God, who giveth True Vertue in Abundance : So that all that which I speak and do in this VVorld, doth only regard the Good and Advantage of my Neighbour ; and I am moved only by a Christian Charity, to give Counsel, to Write and cause to Print my Writings ; for I stand not in need of any Book, seeing I make use of none.

Whereby you may see, that I do nothing for my Self ; and that I seek nothing but the good of my Neighbour, And therefore that ye ought to be glad to submit your Will to a Person, who seeketh nothing but your Eternal Welfare, even to the Prejudice of her Repose, and of her Ease, and of her Conveniency. And he must be an Enemy to his own Good, who will not seek the opportunity of obeying and submitting his will to a Person, that knows the will of God in every thing, and declares it unto others with all her Might. So that he must be of a Cruel and Rebellious Spirit, who will not submit to things so good, and deny his Own Will for to follow the Will of God, which can never be Evil or will any thing that is Evil.

And you may be well assured, that I have no other Will but that of God ; and that my Own, doth not live any more in me. For I have by the Grace of God past this third Bridge of Renouncing my Own Will : and I have Resigned it to God, who turns and sets it, according to his Good Pleasure. Wherewith I am always Content, as I suppose, my Children, you have seen abundantly by Experience : for I bless him in all times, in Ease and Hardships, in Adversity as in Prosperity : And I would not, that any thing had gone otherwise, than all the Adversities, you have seen befall me ; seeing all hath fallen



out for my Good, and God hath reaped his Glory, from the Injuries of our Adversaries.

And if you were thus subjected to the Will of God, there would not be Contradiction among us any more, as there is but too often; because that Every one of you follows his own Will, and not the Will of God: For if the Will of God were followed, we would be all agreed, without my having need to advise or recommend any thing to you, in regard that the VWill of God being one, would dictate to us the same Things; and that which I will, would be that which ye will, without Contradiction.

But because you follow as yet, the VWill of the Devil, and I follow the VWill of God, there are always Contradictions therein, and it will never be otherwise, until that your VWill be submitted unto the VWill of God; then shall there be nothing but Peace, Love, and according to the Prophecy, *Noorstrand* shall be governed as an Earthly Paradise. But so long as you will follow your own VVills, (as ye are free to do) God can never be honoured among us, and we cannot have Peace, nor edifie our Neighbour.

For it is hateful to see Christians, and those who would be the Children of God, disputing one against another, yea, against their Mother, after they have been convinced in their Consciences, that she is guided by the Holy Spirit. This cannot be by Humane Means; it must be of necessity that the Devil mingleth himself with the Work of God, and seeketh to break the Design which he hath, to make his Spirit revive in Souls of Good Will: For otherwise, it were Impossible, speaking Naturally, that you should so contradict a Person whom you love, and esteem to be the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. And there must be a Diabolical Malice for to do this; which I see very clearly to be such, albeit I cannot make you apprehend it, although you judge the Contradictions made by you against me, to be very ill. I cannot hinder them, because your own VVills, are not submitted to the VWill of God; and that you will not as yet, pass this *Third Bridge*; without the passing whereof, you can never come to the *Heavenly Jerusalem*.

And I may say, as St. Paul said of *Charity*, that albeit a Person should have the Gift of *Propheſie*, and remove *Mountains*, and should give all his Goods to feed the *Poor*, yea, and his Body to be burned, all this were nothing without *Charity*. So say I to you, that if you have forsaken the World, and renounced the Covetousness of the Good things thereof, this will be nothing, without that therewith you *Renounce your own Will*; since that your Salvation depends upon this *Renouncing*, and that the other *Two Bridges* are but the way to come to the *Third*; which is so necessary, that without passing it, no Body shall ever come to the *Heavenly Jerusalem*. Wherefore you must use more diligence to pass this *Bridge of Denying your own Will*, than you have done to pass the other Two.

And I may well promise, that it will prove as Easie as Necessary, to him who hath passed the *Two First Bridges*. But for Worldly Persons, who will not forsake the World, and the Coveting of the Good Things thereof; there can be nothing more difficult to them, than to forsake their own Will: For they esteem it a Happiness to be able to follow their own Wills in all things; which is a great Blindness, because that our own Will being Corrupt, leađeth the Person that follows it, into all sort of Mischiefs: But he who can submit his own Will to the Will of God, is Happy in this World and in Eternity, seeing he can never do evil, in following the Divine Will.

For this cause, every one should study to do this, and never to follow his own Will, when he may learn the Will of God daily, as every one of you may do by the Grace of God. For if you cannot discover this Holy Will Immediately by your selves, you may notwithstanding, know it Mediatly by my Means: For I know the Will of God in \* every thing, and I never do any thing, without having known from what Morions the Desires I have of doing or forbearing a Thing, do proceed. Because I always suspect my Own Will, yea, and the Will of God also, when I am not well confirmed,

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\* See the Page 47. where this is Explained.

that it is God that moves me to do any thing, or forbear it.

And this proceeds from the ill Opinion I have of the Self-Will of Man, because I know it to be Corrupt, that it is capable to corrupt our best and holiest Actions. For to Pray, Fast, or do any good work from our own Will, is Sin, because this is done for our own Satisfaction. To give to the Poor, to Visit the Sick, to go to Churches, to use the Sacraments, and all other Good VVorks, even to give your Body to be Martyr'd, (as saith Saint Paul) are nothing, when these Good VVorks are done, to satisfy our own VVill: Because he who desireth to satisfy himself, is out of the way of Loving and Satisfying of God; whereof St. Paul speaks, and hath nothing that pleases God.

VVhich thing every one ought to fear, and to be upon his Guard, to examine if he does not even his Good VVorks by Self Love: For I have known Persons, who were daily employed for Two or Three Hours, in Mental Prayer and Meditation, and were displeased when they wanted Time to do so; they complained of the Importunity of their Affairs, when they did not allow them this Leisure; thinking they did better to continue at their Prayers, than to wait upon necessary things, wherein they were greatly deceived; of which I advertised them out of Charity, because I saw that these Persons made no Progress in Solid Vertue by their Prayers; and that after having continued Twenty Years in them, they were still as much Lovers of Themselves, by Covering Riches, Honours and their Bodily Pleasures, as the first Day they took in Hand these Prayers of so long Continuance: VVhich thing made me clearly see, that these Prayers proceeded only from Self-Love, and not from the VVill of God, but from corrupt Self-VVill, which rendred all these good Actions evil.

And I have known others who impoverished themselves, by giving too much of their Goods to the Poor, and had so great an inclination to give to others, that they had not the foresight to keep for their own Necessities. And all this was done by pure Self-Love, and of their Own Will, which is always enclined to make it self be loved and esteemed by every one. To which, Liberality contributes very much. For the VVorld doth always honour and

and esteem those who favour it: and bestow Praises upon those Persons who give Liberally unto them. And corrupt Nature is ordinarily pleased to be Valued and Esteem'd, and for this cause stirreth up it self to give the more; in regard it's always more Honourable to give than to receive Gifts. And therefore this giving to the Poor, for to satisfie our Own Will and to be esteem'd Liberal, is a Sin instead of a Vertue.

Which thing very few discover: and they often think that they are Saints, for having said their Prayers, or given a little of their Goods to the Poor, albeit this communicates no Holyness to their Souls, *tho they should give all their Goods to feed the Poor*, (as saith St. Paul) *yea even their Bodies to be burned*. For I have known Persons who procured their own Death, thro' too much Fasting and macerating their Bodies, by Pennance: into which fault, I my Self had fallen, if God had not restrained me. For I committed Excesses in my Youth, in the Business of Macerating the Body. Because it seem'd to me, that the Body ought to be murder'd by Penitence, for the Infidelity which I had committed against God. Wherein the Devil might easily have mingled himself to destroy me, if he could, by these Excesses of Fervour and Penitence. In which things Self-Love may have place.

For he who takes in hand to embrace Vertue, thinks to have it by Force, and will not wait the Time of the Mercy of God with Humility, but throws himself sometimes into Extremities: Which thing also Self-Will doth, which will needs have Perfection by much Fasting and Afflicting the Body: which is the Sin of Ambition and of desiring to be Holy, for our own Satisfaction. For God hath no need of our Holiness, seeing he alone is Holy, and Man is all Evil, and all Sin. So that all that he doth of his own Will is evil; albeit, he should do things most Holy in themselves, they are corrupted by the perverse Will of corrupt Nature.

Yet notwithstanding, we must not say as these blind Reformed, who say that *our Good Works are Filthynefs*, yea, that they are *Thorns which pierce the Body of Christ*, as one of them said to me one Day, and founded his Saying upon the Scripture, where some Prophet hath said, that *the Good Works of Men are Filthynefs*. Which is most true, for the best Actions of men are Filthynefs, and Sins which offend God, when they are done of their own Wills and to satisfie Themselves.

But we must not from thence draw this Consequence, that all sorts of good Works are evil, and that we must despise them as Unprofitable, to our Salvation : Since the Holy Scripture saith, that *according to our Works we shall be Judged, and according to our Works we shall be Condemned.* And Jesus Christ said elsewhere, *If ye repent not, ye shall all perish :* And that *he who taketh not up his Cross and followeth him cannot be his Disciple.* And the Apostle exhorteth to Fast, to Watch and to Pray, and saith, *that we must work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* And Jesus Christ saith *that we must always Pray and never Cease,* with so many other Passages of the Scriptures, which admonish Men to do Good Works, yea, Macerations of the Body. For St. Paul said expressly, *that he chastened his Body, for to bring it in Subjection, that while he preached the Gospel to others, himself might not be a Reprobate.*

\* By which we may well understand, That we must do good Works for to be Saved, and to avoid Eternal Damnation. But these ignorant Persons understand not the Prophets, nor the sense of the Scriptures, and wrest them as corrupt Nature would have it. And because that it desireth to take its Ease, and its Pleasures in this World, Men make one another believe that we need not do Good Works for to be saved, or to satisfie God : falsely persuading themselves, That *our Good Works displease him,* to the end they may freely dispense with them, and give Loose Reins to their corrupt Nature, to Sin without Fear, and to Live as the Rich Man in the Gospel, who went down to Hell, because he made good Chear, and Cloathed himself with Purple and fine Linen. As likewise do at present the greater part of Men, even the well-meaning, who think that they ought not to do Good Works to be Saved.

And that they may dispense the better with them, they say, *that our Good Works are Filthiness, and that they displease God, or that it is a Justifying of our selves, to do Good Works to be Saved.* Which is a Doctrine that is abominable, and stinking in God's Nostrils, who hath sent Men into this Valley of Miseries, to do Penance for their Sins, in Purging their Souls by means thereof, to the end they

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\* That Good Works are Necessary.

may recover his Mercy, and the Pardon of their Sins. VVhich appears by the Sentence of the false Rich Man of the Gospel, *who saith, because he had Good Things in this World, and Lazarus Evil Things; therefore he is Condemned, and Lazarus is Saved.* How then is it possible, that Men now a-days should have fallen into such a Blindness of Spirit, as to believe that Good VVorks are Evil, or not Necessary to Salvation? when they see that the Scripture, in so many places, exhorteth continually to Good VVorks, and that at the Judgment of God, it seems he will Save Men, only because they have done Good VVorks; and that he will Condemn them also, because they have not done Good VVorks: Seeing he will say to the one, *Come ye blessed of my Father: because I was Hungry, and ye gave me to Eat; and I was Thirsty, and ye gave me to Drink, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World.* And to others, *Go ye Cursed into Eternal Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels; because I was Hungry, and ye gave me not to Eat, and I was Thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink.* Giving thereby to understand, as if Salvation depended upon Good VVorks, and as if Damnation would only befall those, who have not done Good VVorks: whilst these Blind ones despise Good VVorks and will do nothing to have Eternal Salvation.

Which is a great Pride to presume that God is obliged to give it, without their doing any thing on their Part to obtain it: albeit Jesus Christ saith expressly, *Seek the Kingdom of Heaven and the Rest shall be given you.* Now if we must Seek the Kingdom of Heaven, this is a Sign that we cannot come to it, without doing something for to have it: and far less will we come to it, while we take our Pastime in this World, whereas Jesus Christ Toild, Fasted and Laboured, and Suffered ev'n to his Death, and so entred into his Glory, saying that *he is the Way, and that he who entereth by him, shall be sav'd:* and elsewhere he saith to Men, *Be ye Followers of me.*

All these Things, with many others which are found in the Holy Scripture, sufficiently testify that we ought to do Good works as much as we are able: seeing at the last Judgment, it will be said, *Behold the Man and his Works,* and not behold the Man and his *fine Speculations* or his *frivolous discourses*, whereby they endeavoured to persuade

swade us, that it is a *Justifying of our selves to do Good Works*, for to be saved : in regard that these very Words do Condemn those men, who know that it appears so evidently in the Gospel, that Jesus Christ did Fast and Pray, since it's said in the beginning of his Passion, that, *Jesus Christ according to his Custom was gone to the Garden of Olives to Pray*. We see in so many Places, that Jesus Christ did Good Works : for from the Age of twelve Years, when his Mother found him in the Temple, and complained that he had left her, Jesus Christ said, *I must do the Work that my Father hath commanded me*. And all his Lifetime, he laboured, and travelled by Sea and Land, for to accomplish the Will of his Father.

He endured Hunger and Thirst, seeing the Devil tempted him, to turn Stones into Bread, because he was Hungry, : and that he cryed in the Agony of Death, *I Thirst*. He suffered the toil and weariness of a Life truly Penitent : and said unto Men, *He that believeth in me doth the Works which I do*.

Who then can doubt, that we must of Necessity do Good Works to be Saved, when Jesus Christ commands it, and saith to him that believeth in him, *that he ought to do the Works which he did* ; How can these Glossers on the Scripture, overturn Truths so Certain and so Clearly explain'd in the Scriptures themselves, for to make People now believe, that, *it is a Justifying our selves to do Good Works to be Saved, or that the good Works, which men do, are Filthiness before God*. May we not clearly see that we live in the Time foretold by the Prophet : *That our Leaders are Seducers* ? For what greater Seduction can befall a Christian, than to make him believe, that he's not obliged to Imitate Jesus Christ, for to be a Christian, nor to do Good Works for to be Saved ? seeing this is to overturn the Gospel, the Law of God, and all that which the Holy Prophets have foretold. For God hath ordained to Man for his Sin, *that he shall win his Bread, with the Sweat of his Face* : And all the Prophets have foretold so many Curses, to those who shall not do Good Works, by keeping the Commandments of God ; and have also foretold so many Blessings to those who shall keep them, and do Good Works. For God hath promised to multiply all the Goods of those, who shall faithfully bring their Tithes into his House. Read, my Child, the whole



Bible, and you shall find there, how God hath always Blessed those, who did Good, and punished those who did Evil, becaule he is Just, and will always give to every one according to his Works.

And therefore do Good Works as much as you can, and you shall be recompensed, for every one of them to all Eternity ; But if you shall believe this Doctrine, that Good Works are not Necessary to Salvation , and will needs live at Ease in taking your Pleasures in this World, that will befall you, which is Written in the Revelation, concerning the Great Whore, of whom the Lord hath said : *Give her as many Torments as she hath received Pleasures in her Whoredoms.* For this Whore is not one Person or one Church only, as is imagin'd, but all the Souls of Christians. For each Soul of a Christian is the Spouse of God, to whom it hath publickly promised Truth and Fidelity by Baptism. Which Truth and Fidelity, the Christian Soul ought to keep to it's God, ev'n unto Death, more than the Faith which a Woman promises to her Husband in Marrying him : albeit that she would be holden for a Whore and an Adulteress, if she should falsifie her promise to her Husband ; how much more should the Soul of a Christian, be holden for an Adulteress, which falsifyeth it's Faith given to God it's Lawful Spouse , for to take it's Delights and Pleasures, in the infamous Pleasures of the Earth. For this Cause it is that God will say to such a Soul at Death ; *Give her as many Torments as she hath taken Pleasures in this World.* For she ought not to take her Delight but in God alone : seeing the Soul of Man was not created, but for to Love its God, and nothing else.

And therefore All that which it doth out of this Love is Evil and Sin, even it's Good Actions : from which notwithstanding it ought not to desist, for the Inventions of Men, who say, that they are Filthiness, or that it is to Justifie One's Self, to do Good Works for to be Saved. But you must strive to do Good Works, my Child, according as you have a desire to approach nearer unto Jesus Christ : with this Condition notwithstanding, that ye do your Good Works for to Please God, and not to Satisfie your Self or any other Creature.

For in this consisteth all the Good and Evil of your Good Works. Seeing the same Works will be Holy, when they shall

shall be done in the Will of God, and they will be Evil and Sins, when they shall be done by the Self Will of Man, or for to satisfie our Selves. For all Sins and all Vertue also, coufist in following the Will of God, or in following our Own VWill ; seeing there is no other Sin in Substance, but that of withdrawing our Affections from God, for to place them upon any Creature : And there is no other True Vertue in Substance, bur that of having all our Affections fixed upon God.

And by this True Supposition, you may comprehend by your Natural Judgment, *How the Good Works of Men are Filthines, and how Man Justifieth himself by his Good Works* : For of Necessity every Good VWork done for to please Men, or to satisfie our selves must be disagreeable to God, Unclean, and defiled with Sin ; seeing the Person was created for no other end but to Love him, and that notwithstanding he carrieth his Affections, unto Vile and Abiect Creatures, in Contempt of the End, for which he was created by God. He incurreth also his disgrace, so long as he abideth out of his Love, and he abides out of his Love, in so far as he Loves Himself or other Creatures. And therefore all the VWorks which he doth in that State, are nothing but VWorks defiled by Sin, albeit that in themselves, these VWorks be good, they are rendred Evil for being done out of the Grace of God, and shall be Condemned and Rejected by him as Filthines. It is in this sence, that *God searcheth the Reins, and examineth the Consciences, and will Condemn our Righteousness* : That is to say, those which are done for our Own Glory, or for to receive Glory from Men. It is moreover in this Sence that the Scripture speaks, when it saith by the Prophet, who speaking of Men, saith, that *God will throw the Dung of their Solemnities into their Faces*, because they are done for their Own Glory, and for the satisfaction of Men, and not for to Honour God. This is the Reason why in Truth they may be called Filthines and Uncleaness, worthy to be rejected, yea to be thrown into the Faces of those who thus rob God of his Glory, by their Solemnities and Good VWorks, for to have the Praise and Satisfaction of them Themselves.

Understand also, my Child, with your Judgment, that Men Justify themselves, when they do these Good VWorks for to be esteem'd of Men, or for their own

Satisfaction, in desiring to be esteem'd Vertuous or Godly; and you may Judge, by a Right Judgment, That no Good VVorks of such like Nature can be Valid before God, and that they ought to be Condemned by him, seeing they are done out of Vain Glory and Self Esteem, in seeking to appear Good and Just before Men: which is a Sin of Pride and Ambition, because there is nothing Good and Just but God only, and therefore Man ought not to ascribe these Qualities to himself, nor to do any Good VVork, for to have this Reputation.

Howbeit, we should not forbear to do as many Good VVorks as we can, during this Mortal Life, into which we are sent as into a Valley of Tears, for to purge away our Sins, and to fight against our Enemies, seeing St. Paul saith, *That our Life is a continual Warfare*: How can we abide without Fighting, or doing Good VVorks for to overcome our Corrupt Nature, without suffering our selves to be overcome by our Mortal Enemies; which are, the Devil and the Corruption of our Flesh? VVhich Enemies we must continually vanquish and overcome, if we would be Saved. And for this, Good VVorks are precisely Necessary to Salvation. Not that God hath need of our Good VVorks for to Save us; but we have need to do Good VVorks for to be Saved, or to overcome the Corruption of our Nature, which is Condemned of it Self by the first Sin, and more deeply, by our own Subsequent Sins. Inasmuch, that there is nothing Sound in Man: and he is wholly Corrupted and Perisheth Eternally, if he do not return to an Entire New Birth, by coming out of that Corruption, for to revive unto the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

VVhich thing cannot be done, but by Means of Combats and Good VVorks; For the Scripture saith, *That the Kingdom of Heaven must be gain'd by Force, and that the Violent take it by Force*. And does not Jesus Christ say to his Apostles, concerning some Devils: *This kind of Devils goeth not forth, but by Means of Fasting and of Prayer*. Upon which I would willingly ask the Reform'd, who despise Good VVorks, how they can be freed of these kinds of Devils, if they will not Fast nor Pray to obtain their Salvation? Of Necessity these Devils must carry them away. Since Jesus Christ, who is the Truth it Self saith, *That they go not forth, but by the Means of Fasting and of Prayer*. And how shall these carry

carry the Kingdom of Heaven by Force, who will do nothing to have it?

VWhereby we may see, in how Great an Error all these Persons are who despise Good Works, and in how Dangerous a Time we live at present; Seeing in it, a Lye is taught for the Truth. And albeit these Preachers teach the Gospel by VVords, they belie it by their Glosses and by their Actions, and teach the People, That they cannot Imitate Jesus Christ, albeit he saith expresly, *Be ye Followers of me*; and that to do Good VVorks to be Saved, is to Justifie Our Selves; VWhereas the Scripture saith, *Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling*: And in another place it's said, *Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that which shall endure Eternally*. By which it appears, that God precisely commandeth, to Labour, and to do Good VVorks, for obtaining Eternal Life. For he saith, *Ask and ye shall obtain, Knock and it shall be opened unto you; and he that seeketh, findeth, &c.*

But the Persons who will needs continue Living according to their Corrupt Natures, have studied VVords altogether contrary to the Gospel, for to flatter Men with a Vain Hope of Salvation, in perswading them fallily, That they have no need to do Good VVorks for obtaining it. Albeit Jesus Christ saith, *That he is come to give us an Example*, by saying to Men, *That they would have had no Sin, if he had not done in their presence the Works which he did*. For to make them understand that they cannot pretend the Excuse of Ignorance, after they have seen Jesus Christ Labour and do Good VVorks, all the Days of his Life, for to give them an Example; and to the End that Men might follow him, and do Good VVorks in imitation of him; and while he saith further unto them, *He who Loveth me, Keepeth my Commandments, and he that believeth in me doth the Works which I do*: And elsewhere he saith, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and they follow me, and whither I go, they will go also with me*. And it is a great Deceit to believe, that we shall go into the Glory of Jesus Christ for all Eternity, when we would not go with him in this VVorld in Suffering and in Penitence, seeing he saith expresly, *That, he who will come after him, must take up his Cross and follow him*. So that we must absolutely deny the Gospel, to say that Good VVorks are not Necessary to Salvation,

since that without them no Body shall be Saved, and that every one shall be Judged and Condemned by his Works, and no otherwise.

But these new Doctors have found out so Subtile Inventions to seduce Men, that it were impossible to discover these Seductions without the Spirit of God, or the Light of the Spirit, which is promised by Jesus Christ, which must teach all Truth. For they cover their Errours with Holiness and Humility, albeit they are in effect Abominations and High Pride. And they say first, that, *it is Pride, or at least, it is to Justifie Our Selves to do Good Works to be Saved:* And Secondly, they say that *we must do Good Works in Acknowledgment of that which Jesus Christ hath done, for which we must not be Unthankfull, nor Neglect the Good Offices of Jesus Christ.* Which things give a Colour of Piety to their Sins, in seeking to give Thanks to God, by their Good Works, and acknowledging they can merit nothing by their Good works, nor have Salvation by their Merits; which is most True. For Salvation was given us immediately by God, at the time of our Creation, and all Men were created in Adam to Salvation, and made Heirs of Heaven. In so much that they ought to do nothing for to have this Kingdom, which was freely given them in Property. And also Temporal Man could not merit the least thing that's Eternal. And all the Good works of Angels and Men together, can never Merit the least Degree of Eternal Glory. Likewise God will never have need of any Merits for to Save Men, seeing he is Almighty, Independent of all things, particularly of the Merits of Men.

But albeit this be True, with relation to God, yet is it not True with relation to Men, seeing they have need to imploy all kind of Means for to recover the Grace of God, after having so Carelessly lost it, by their Sins: And after that man hath Voluntarily thrown himself into Hell, can it be said with Truth that he would be Presumptuous, or that he would Justifie Himself, in doing his Endeavour to come out of it? And is it not a Greater Presumption when he saith that he would do Nothing to come out of it, and that God must deliver him from it, if he would Save him? For God hath no need of Men, and he remains as Glorious, when Man abides in Hell, as when he Saves himself: Seeing God is a Sovereignty Independent from all things, whose Glory depends upon Nothing but Himself.

And

And if Man doth Good VVorks, it's only for Himself: for God has nò need of our Acknowledgments.

And it is a great Pride to think that God would have Man to do Good Works for to Honour him, or to Acknowledge or Recompense that which he hath done for Men: seeing he hath nothing worthy of God, and that Man can never do any thing, in Acknowledgment of the Favours received from his God. in regard that Man is but a Poor Nothing, Meer VWeakness, a Sack of Miteries and Corruption, from which can proceed Nothing VVorthy to be offered unto God, or to be presented to him, in Acknowledgment of that which God has done for Man. For these New Casuists themselves Say, that the Good VVorks of Men are Filthiness: How then will they present to God Filthiness in Recompense of that which God has done for them? This were Odious; for the Proverb Says, that it were better to have our Vessel Empty, than Fill'd with Uncleaness.

By which it appears, that those Ignorant Persons contradict themselves by their Evil Doctrines, while they say on the one Side, that *Good Works are Filthiness and Thorns, which pierce the Body of Jesus Christ*; and on the other Side, *That we must do Good Works in Testimony of the Love we bear to God*: which cannot agree; for a Person would hold it for a great Affront, if any should present him with Filthiness and Thorns that pierce his Body in Recompense of the Good Deeds which he had received from that Person. Must we not then Believe, that God would find himself much more Affronted, when his Creature should present him with Filthiness and Things that offend him? This is what these Reformed do, who say, *That Good Works are Filthiness*. And on the other side, *that they must do Good Works, in Testimony of the Love they bear unto God*.

Surely, my Child, it is time that God send his Holy Spirit that *Leads Men into all Truth*, seeing they are in so Great Darkness, that they know not whither they are going, and take, almost in All Things, that which is False for True, and Sin for the Truth. Reckon your self happy for having known the Truth from Lying, and follow it faithfully even unto Death.

\* And if you would come to the Heavenly *Jerusalem* I show you the VVay to it, and I declare unto you, how you must pass Three Bridges, to wit, that of Leaving and Forsaking the VVorld, that of Forsaking All Sort of Covetousness, and that of Forsaking your Own VVill; and I assure you there is no other VVay to come to Life Eternally Happy. Let others travel by such VVays as seem good to them: without passing these Three Bridges, they shall never arrive at the Heavenly *Jerusalem*.

I am a Pilgrimage who travel towards Eternal Life, and I have very few Persons that follow me, many are of Good VVill but lose heart in the Practice of True Vertue, they would fain Love God and Themselves. They would gladly forsake the VVorld, while they continue still addicted to Humane Respects, being willing to please Men.

They would willingly forsake the Covetousness of the Riches of this World, but they covet still that which is Gratefull to them; and they would gladly forsake their Own Will, providing the Will of God were agreeable to their Inclinations. And so these Persons remain in the Way, and do not arrive at the desired Port, for lack of not advancing to Solid Vertue; and to the Passing of the Three so necessary Bridges: and it were almost as good never to have begun, as not to accomplish our Journey, for it profits little to have fought, without carrying the Victory. You have already past the first Bridge, and you travel on the Second, but the Victory consists in passing the Third: and he alone who hath overcome his Own Will, shall be Crown'd with Glory, because there is nothing good except the Will of God; and all that which proceeds from our Own will is Evil, albeit, the Things which it doth or desireth, have an Appearance of Good, all is rendred evil, by the Corruption of our Own Will. For this cause you must never follow it in any Thing, if ye would please God, but resist your Own Will, and deny it all that it desires. For they are evil Things which proceed from our Own Will, or at least they are Things which tend to an evil End, and by how much we Die to Our Selves, by So much, we shall

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\* That we cannot attain to True Vertue without passing these Three Bridges.

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Live



Live unto God, and no more; for a Body cannot be raised up, if it be not first dead, so also our Souls cannot be born again unto the Spirit of Jesus Christ, if they be not first dead to their own Perverse Wills.

And we must not walk by four Ways to go to Life Eternal, Since there is but one that Leads to it, which is to forsake Evil and do Good. Now the Evil is in our Own Will, and we must forsake it and deny it, all that which it desires. For all Good being in God, we must follow his Holy Will for to do Good: seeing out of the Will of God, there can be no Good; be it never so little. Wherefore we must of Necessity, follow the Will of God for to be saved; seeing that in that Holy Will, consists all Sorts of Perfections, and all Sorts of Good Works are nothing but Means, for attaining to this Submission of our Own will unto the Will of God, wherein is contained the Perfection of all Good, and the Height of all Perfection. For albeit a Person had acquired all Sorts of Verrues, he would have Nothing, if he hath not submitted his Own Will to the VWill of God, and passed this Third Bridge, which is easie to be passed, for him who hath forsaken the VWorld, and the Covetousness of the good Things thereof. For what can a Person imagine to himself more sweet, than to submit his Will to the Will of God, and to suffer himself to be guided by it? seeing this brings to the Soul, Joy and Inward Repose, and the Soul doth then live as a Child without Care, that's carried in the Arms of it's Father, while it relays wholly on him, knowing well that it's Father Will not suffer it to fall, and by his Care will not permit that any Evil happen to it. How much more ought a Soul to rest quietly in the Arms of God, when it hath entirely resigned it's Own Will unto him, for to suffer it Self to be Guided, Ruled and Govern'd by it's God? For it is then in a Place of Security and a Sanctuary of Rest, and it may well cease then from doing all sorts of Good Works, for God shall do all things in it: And it shall do nothing any more, except to be Passive and Content with that which God shall do in it, taking all with Joy and Thanksgiving.

And such a Soul is always Contented and Joyful: whereas the Persons who follow their own Wills, are never Content, and have always a Regret for having followed their Own Will; for the End thereof is always Evil. For this Cause it is Good, Profitable and Salutary to

submit our Own Will to the Will of God, which will evermore lead us to our Eternal Happiness. For he has no need of our Submission for his Glory, but we have need to submit ourselves to him, for our Good and our Salvation.

Wherefore, my Child, you must not fear to pass the Third Bridge of Renouncing your Own Will, where you make a Grain of Sand appear to your Self as a Mountain: For this Road is Pleasant, and this Way is Sweet; there needs no more but a good strong Resolution for to resign our Own will unto the Will of God, and to resist it, and then God will Second these Designs, and you shall begin to taste in this World, that it is Sweet to be conducted by God, and that this is even Pleasant unto Nature, and Acceptable to our Neighbour, who will converse willingly with Persons that are always content, as these assuredly are, who have Resigned Their Wills to the Will of God; because all that which befalls them is pleasing to them, and in taking it from the Hands of God, they are always Content and Joyful. You shall see this by Experience, if you were once on this Third Bridge, and you shall feel Joy for having done well, whereas now you feel Sadness for having done ill, in following your Own Will, which ye will always regret, in regard that it is always Evil, and you can never do well but in following the Will of God.

And therefore resolve this absolutely and put it in Practice, if you would be happy in this World and in the other, for in Truth I would love you extremely, if you were Entirely submitted to the Will of God, and I would be always Sweet and Agreeable to you, because that Joy possesses my Soul, and Peace is my Repose, and I can never be ill, nor troubled except for Sin: and when I see that you do not accomplish the Will of God, this alone makes me ill. And if you would have me to be Good, submit your Wills to the Will of God. I shall declare it sufficiently to you, and you may be well assured that I'll never demand any Thing of you, except that which shall be the Will of God; and therefore you ought to obey me with Joy as True Children, and not as Slaves who do by Constraint all that which they ought, and would not do it otherwise, or Hirelings who Work no longer than the Masters Eye is upon them: for these Things are displeasing

40      *That Poverty of Spirit, &c.*      Part II.  
pleasing to me, and far more unto God who hath  
created all Men Free and will not Force them to  
any Thing ; which she assures you of, My Children,  
who longeth for your Regeneration in the Spirit of  
Jesus Christ,

October 1.  
1674.

*Anthoñette Bourignon.*

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## L E T T E R II.

That Self-Will is always evil.

*To a Person not very Tractable, who Loved  
his Own Will, desiring in the mean time to come  
to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to whom is disco-  
ver'd the Necessity of Denying our Own Will for  
to be Sav'd.*

*My Child,*

**Y**OU can never become a True Child of God, so long  
as you shall follow your Own Will, because that it  
being corrupted by Sin, can do nothing but Evil; for no  
Good can ever proceed from Corruption, seeing Every  
Thing begets it's like, Corruption can bring forth No-  
thing but Corruption.

Wherefore you'l evermore do Evil, in following your  
Own Corrupt Will, and if you do not fight against it,  
contradict it in every Thing, you shall never acquire True  
Vertue; and therefore you cannot be acceptable to God,  
nor become a true Christian as you desire, because all sort  
of Good, of Vertue, of Perfection, and of Salvation, come  
from God alone, and no Good proceedeth from Man.

Which thing God has made me to know, for the Foun-  
dation of the Edifice of Vertue, which he was desirous to  
plant

plant in my Soul. For if I had not known that my Own Will was Evil and Corrupt, I could never have resisted it, Since there is nothing more pleasing to this Nature, than to fulfill it's Own Will: and it would often love rather to have Hardships and Want according to it's Own, than Ease and Abundance according to the Will of Another.

I find this by Experience, in reference to you, and I see that you cannot submit your Own Will in any Thing; and albeit you see often, your Own Will doth Evil, yet will you not contradict it, nor even confess the Evil which it doth, seeking rather Wayes to excuse it, or to cover the Evil which it doth, sometimes by Reasons and Arguments which excuse it, sometimes by defending it, to make that which is spoiled pass for well done; yea which is worse, you sometimes go out of Your Self, and seek for Evil in Others out of Revenge, instead of acknowledging your own Fault and striving to amend it.

Which is a Great Imperfection for him who would become a True Christian: For all the Imperfections you can find in others, will not lessen your Own Defects, which you must know and amend your self if you would be Saved: but the Defects of others cannot damn you, nor hinder the Perfection of your Soul: it concerns every one to amend his own defects and not those of others: and if you had True Charity in your Heart, you would be Sad and Sorry to see the Defects of Others out of Compassion, because God hath commanded, *To Love God with All Our Heart, and our Neighbours as our selves.* And seeing you love the Perfection of your Own Soul, you ought also to love the Perfection of the Soul of your Neighbour, in the same degree as your Own; and to be Sorry at the Bottom of your Heart for the Faults of your Neighbour, instead of inquiring into them, and rejoicing when you have found any. Which is directly against Charity: Seeing S. Paul saith, *That it rejoiceth not in Unrighteousness, and thinketh not Evil.*

And I know that of a Truth, you have often thought Evil of my Greatest Perfections, for want of the Spirit of Discerning; and have Judged of that, which God teacheth me, in Evil part, as if by Passion or Natural Inclination I did the Things which he declares unto me. Wherein you are greatly deceived: for I would not follow so much as one Word or Action proceeding from my Own Will for all the World, knowing that my Own Will is as corrupt

as that of all the Rest of Men ; Seeing all those who are come forth out of Adam, are conceived in Sin and equally corrupted thereby ; and all their Own Wills have been perverted and can do no Good of Themselves : For if a Person have a Good Thought, it comes immediately from God, and not from that Person who of himself can bring forth Nothing that is Good, nor have the Least Motion towards Good : But it is God, who out of the Love which he bears to Man, continually gives him Good Desires, Good Thoughts and Good Motions ; to draw him to the Blessed Eternal Life, for which Man was created.

And it's always God who moveth the Will of a Person to do Good, albeit he forceth no Body to follow these good Motions : because it was his VWill to have Man a Creature altogether Free, that he might be loved by him, with a Reciprocal Love ; and that as God is willing to take his Delight with Men, so they would also of their Free VWill take their Delight with God.

And we must never say as these Inconsiderate Persons, who blame God when they do Evil and do not Good, as if this came through want of the Grace of God : which is most false, seeing God never fails to give his Grace : and there is no Man, how wicked and profligate so ever, that can say with Truth, that he never in his Life had Good Thoughts, good Desires, yea and good Resolutions, because it is the Property of God, always to give and do Good : but it is the Property of Corrupt Nature, to resist Good and do Evil.

These Things are natural to these Two different Objects ; for God cannot cease to do Good, as Man cannot cease to do Evil, when he follows his Corrupt Nature.

VWhich you'll find by Experience in your Self, My Child, if you shall apply your Spirit maturely to consider all your VVords and Actions, and you shall find them in Effect all evil, because they proceed as yet from your Own VWill, from which no Good can proceed, as I have told you already.

And therefore if you would become a Child of God, suspect all you say or do, and never slacken the Reins to your Own VWill, if you would not do evil and resist the Graces which God offers you. He has chosen you for his Child, privatively to so many others who live in the Darkness of Death, and know not whither they are going  
where.

Let. II. *That Self-Will is always Evil.* 43

whereas you know the True VVay of Salvation, if you will follow it. But if you shall voluntarily take a Contrary VVay in persisting to follow your Own VVill; be not astonished if God does not increase his Graces towards you: In vain do you desire that I would recommend you to God; for when your self are not submitted to do his VVill, they are but VVords thrown in the Air, to entreat that I would Pray for you. So long as you are not Resigned unto the Government of your Heavenly Father, it is impossible that you can make Progress in Good; because there can be no Good but that which cometh from God, and you aspire after Good in following your Own VVill.

This is to seek for Good there, where it is not, yea, where all sort of Evil is. And therefore proceed no further in that VVay, if you would attain to Salvation, which God alone can give you. Suffer your self to be Govern'd by his Holy Spirit, and not by the insolent Spirit of your Corrupt Nature, which Tyranizes over your Heart, and makes you miserable in this Present Life, for to be so to all Eternity. The Conduct of God, is Sweet and Pleasant, Joyful and Comfortable, VVell Ordered, Tempered, which gives Force equally to the Soul and the Body. And the Person who gives up himself to the Conduct of God, is as a Child without Care, carried in the Arms of his Father, who hath no other Care but to rejoice under such a Protection. And all the Misery of Man is, that he doth not suffer Himself to be Govern'd by this Spirit of Eternal VVisdom, and wisheth rather to follow the Motions of his Own Passions that trouble him, than the Motions of the Holy Spirit which comfort.

You do this, My Child, when, what you ought to do, you desire to do according to your Own VVill, and when you complain for having often done Things against your Inclination, yea, that with the Disciples of *S. Francis*, you have planted Coleworts with their Roots upwards: VVhereas if you were VVise and Loved your own Good, you should regrave that you have followed your Own VVill in any Thing, protesting that you will follow it no more, seeing it is so Corrupt and Perverted, that the Things which it esteems most are worth Nothing, yea, very Ill; And this disposition of yours would make me hope for an Amendment: VVhereas the Reproaches which you make me, that you have not followed your Own

VVill in Any Thing, make me doubt, whether you will become a Child of God; in regard that none shall become such, except those who renounce their Own VVills to submit them unto the VVill of God, in things Small and Great without Exception; and even without Considering, whether God's Conduct seemeth Sweet or Sharp to us, Agreeable or Disagreeable to Nature and Humane Sense: because it is necessary that the Obedience we owe unto God, be Blind to our Understanding, which often discerneth Falsely, and is no ways capable to Judge of the Government or Designs which God hath upon us.

Wherefore, it is Expedient for him, who would become the Child of God, to Suffer himself Entirely to be Governed by him, without having a Will or a Willing in any Thing, being always Ready to Accomplish his Holy Will, as soon as he knows it, without Reply, without Murmurs, or any Contradictions, doing Readily and Willingly all that which he believes to be the Will of God.

It may be you'l say unto me, that you are in that Disposition, and that in the Bottom of your Soule, you desire not to do Any Thing against the Will of God: whilst in Effect you do Nothing as yet in this Will of God, and you often resist it, for to take your Own Will more to Heart, the Motions whereof you follow more Willingly, than that which I tell you to be the Precise Will of God. It is this wherein you ought to say as Jesus Christ did to St. Peter, *The Spirit is Ready, but the Flesh is Weak.* And if there were Nothing but Infirmary in your Case, I would expect a good Issue: seeing Jesus Christ saith to St. Peter, when he asked him, *how often he should forgive his Brother,* he answered him *Seven times Seventy Times*, which is as an Infinite Number: and albeit I should see you fall Seven times Seventy times a day, from the Will of God to follow your Own; I would not for all that despair if those Falls were made by pure Frailty against your VVill, repenting as often as you fall, and asking Pardon of God with Humility of Heart: and this would be a Continual Prayer which Jesus Christ hath recommended unto Christians, by saying to them, *Pray always and never Cease;* because that seeing the Frailty of Men, he judged that they had need of a Continual Prayer, for their Continual Falls.

But I see with Regret, that your Falls are not so Innocent, and that there is in them, beside Frailty, the VVickedness of



of corrupt Nature, which desires always to excuse it self and juſtifie it's Faults, inſtead of Acknowledging them to be Humbled for them, and to aſk Pardon of them from God, as often as it offends him. This Natural VVickedneſs is proper to all Men who are come of *Adam*, and have inherited this defect of their Old Father, who inſtead of being Humbled for his Sin, endeavoured to caſt the Blame thereof upon his VVife, yea upon God himſelf who had given her to him. But the Souls that would become True Children of God, and Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, do not follow this Natural wickedneſs, but fight againſt it as much as they can, confounding their VVickedneſs by the Confellion of their Faults, drawing from them, Matter of Humility before God and Men, and rather Aggravating their Faults, than Mincing or Excusing them, far leſs will they caſt them upon others, or aſcribe the cauſe of them to any other Thing, than their Own Wickedneſs or Imperfections.

And if I found you in this Diſpoſition, I would have Compaſſion upon your Frailty, and I would Pray to God that he would ſtrengthen you : But I have Already Supported theſe Defects ſo Many Years, until that God ſaid unto me, *that I ſhould no longer ſuffer the Sins of My Children* : VVhom I will Preciſely Obey, and rather loſe the Favour of my Children, yea, and generally of all the Men of the VVorld, than diſobey my God in the Smalleſt Matter. I wrote to you long ago, that God had forbidden me to endure your Sins any more ; but it ſeems you have already forgotten it, ſeeing you would live with me in following your Own Will, in All Things, albeit it is Good in Nothing, and can do Nothing but Evil.

And I never diſcover'd till now, That it is out of Pure VVickedneſs, that you thus follow your Own VVill : for I thought in Time paſt that it was an Habitual Frailty, inveterated by Old Cuſtoms, becauſe there is ſcarce Any Body in the VVorld, who doth not follow his Own VVill, as much as he can. But if you would become the True Child of God, do not conform your Self to the VVorld, ſeeing it muſt periſh with it's Covetouſneſs. And before you reſolve to return to me, you muſt alſo reſolve to deny your Own VVill, otherways you have nothing to do to come back to ſtay with me : for if you will needs perſiſt in following your Own Will,  
and

and to be your Own Lord and Master, you may do in my Absence all that you will, and follow your Own Will, less or more as you shall think fit.

For I have Nothing to say to you, beside the Voluntary Obedience which you owe to God, who Forces No Body to obey him ; he leaves it Free to every One, that he who Will, may do it. And you are yet more Free in Respect of me, because you owe me Nothing, and I Will not have any Subjected to me, for I love rather to Serye than to Rule over Any Body : yea, I never took Authority over my Servants or Tenants : I Governed them by Love and Reason, and not by Humane Authority ; How much less would I Suffer that the Children of God should obey me, or be Subject to my Passions or to my Own VWill ? May this never come to pass : For it displeases me much to hear them say, *As you please*, because Nothing Pleases me but the Will of God, and Nothing displeases me, but that which is Contrary to this VWill.

VVherefore, I esteem it Flattery, when Any say to me, *As you Please* ; because all that which is Good Pleaseth me, and all that which is Evil, displeaseth me : because that Good Pleases God, and Evil displeases him : And my Soul being conformed to his Holy VWill, is Pleased with Nothing but Good, and displeased with Nothing but Evil ; without examining if my Corrupt Nature be Satisfied at this Good or this Evil, because I hearken to it in Nothing : whether it complain or praise, it's all one to me, because I purpose not to give Ear to it in Any Thing : and it is Nothing but an Insolent Beast, that knows not what it would have, and often Judgeth that to be Good for it, which is very Hurtful : as it thinks that a Person wrongs it, or is it's Enemy when he contradicts it, or doth not follow it's Will ; and it cries often like a Swine whose Throat is cutting, when it's Own Wills are resisted.

You are not far from doing of This, My Child, when you say to me that you must often do Things against Your VWill, yea such as you cannot understand to be Good, yea, that I fail sometimes my Self.

This proceeds from the Rebellion of your Corrupt Nature, which Will not endure Reproof without Relenting it, and Avenging it if it can : But if you knew it for such as it is, you would reckon it a Great Happines to have found a Person that knows it, yea and cures it on Occasions ;

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sions ; seeing that, in effect, I can never do a Greater Good to your Soul, than to discover to it, it's defects, and to admonish it to Amend them ; and all the Profit which is in being in my Company, consists in this, that I know the Will of God for to declare it unto Others, and that I watch Continually over the Good of the Souls of those who are in my Company, that I Suffer them not to perish through Ignorance or Want of Reproof.

This is so Great a Favour, that I know no Body that receives it, except those who are with me, in Regard that all Men Flatter those that are like Themselves, and do not reprove those that they Love, flattering them, that they may be also flattered by them : infomuch that Men do not exercise Charity any more, towards the Salvation of Souls ; and the best meaning Persons content themselves to bear with one another, to the End they may Live in Peace together, and not lose Humane Friendship. But I, whose eyes God has opened to see the Truth of Things, as they are before God, take no Care to please or displease Men, and I do say all that which God appoints me, without any Humane Respect. And you ought to love and esteem me for this Cause alone, albeit I did you no other Good, but to declare to you the Will of God, and the Means of attaining to his Love.

How can you be offended with me, because I Watch for your Good, and would oblige you to do the Will of God in Every Thing, so far as he hath made it known to me, and yet daily makes it known to me of a New, or by confirming his former Lights ? And you ought not to doubt, that I have received the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus Christ, which teacheth me, *all Truth*, so far as is *Necessary* for me, and for Those who are willing to follow it. Which Thing you cannot be ignorant of, by so many Testimonies of your Conscience, and Extraordinary Things which you have Seen, since your Abode with me ; and especially since Three Years now past, that Jesus Christ said to me, *That he would be raised up* : For he is truly Raised up in My Soul by his Spirit, which leadeth me at present into all Truth, more particularly than in Time past, and explains to me, wherefore I ought to do and forbear All Things, as well in relation to Temporal Concerns as to Spiritual.

I have written Sundry of these Things to My Children ; but never yet had the Satisfaction, to see Any of Them  
practice

practice in Perfection, so much as One little Point of that VVhich God hath taught me, even of the Small Things of House-keeping, which should be done daily with Measure, VVeight and Order, as a VVell ordered Clock. And how much ought they to admire the Goodness of God, in that he gives them as yet, So Many Spiritual Instructions, tending to perfect their Souls, before they are Faithful in Temporal Things; wherein it seems that God exceeds his promise, when he says, *Be ye Faithful in Small Things, and I will set you over Great.* Since he hath Ground to say with Truth to our Brethren, that they are not Faithful to him in small Things; for their Spirits are as yet so Arrogant, that they despise the Small Things which God teacheth, and it would seem too Mean to them, to apply their Spirits to make a Fire the Right Way, to sweep their Chamber, to hold All Things in Good Order for preserving them, that Nothing be spoild. These are notwithstanding the precise Orders which God has given me, for them and me; which I endeavour to Accomplish: in which they do not follow me, but by Constraint or with Regret, and would think themselves more Happy in following therein their own Motions, than the Ordinances of God.

Which cannot proceed from any Thing but Self-Love and the Pride of Life, for that they will not apply their Spirits to any Thing, which they believe to be Unworthy of them; having forgotten that Jesus Christ their Master, took upon him the form of a Servant, and without Doubt applied himself to Mean and Humble Things all his Life time, and that he always deny'd his Own Will, seeing he says himself, *I am not come to do my Own Will, but the Will of Him that sent me*: in which he saith, *Be ye Followers of me, and he that believeth in me doth the Works that I do.*

VVhy then should my Children be ashamed to do servile work in imitation of Jesus Christ? Are they Greater, Nobler, VViser than their Master and their Saviour, who for the Love which he bears to them, was content to Serve, to be Humbled and Despised of Men? He to VVhom all Kind of Honour and Service belonged, more than to any other Person. He did not apply himself to Affairs of State, or to Trade and VVorldly Business, which seem to be of Importance: but applied himself to

Labour

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Labour and to the Base Offices of the House in Necessary Things, in Silence and Recollection of Spirit with his Parents, until his Time wherein he should edifie Others was come.

Now you say, My Child, that you desire to become the Child of God, and the Disciple of Jesus Christ, and that for these Ends you have forsaken the Traffick of the World and your Countrey, which is True; and I perceive further, that you apply your Self to Servile Works, which testifies a very Commendable Desire of Humility: But I wish you would apply your Spirit, to do Well that which you do, for otherwise All your Endeavours and Services are Unprofitable to the Community, and bring more Hurt than Relief. For Example, if you undertake to make ready Meat for the Community, and do not observe Order, Cleanliness, putting All Things to Profit, or taking Care that Nothing be lost, you double my Care and Travel, instead of Relieving me; and if you do not observe in your Kitchen the Spirit of Poverty, which is contented with the Least and with Necessity, you will bring both Damage and Loss of Time: For if you shall defile Three Vessels when One would do your Business, this is against the Poverty of Jesus Christ, which doth Nothing that is Superfluous: and if you are not fit to make Clean the Vessels which you have defiled, you'll make them Stinking and Crusted over, with the Filth that dries upon Them; and if you do not put these Vessels in their Order after you have used them, you'll lose Time in seeking them, and be troubled not to find them Clean, when you shall need them at Another Time; So that all these Evils are occasion'd by your First Neglect: For if you had taken only what Vessels were Necessary, and had made them Clean, and set them up in their Places again, after you had used them; you would then find all in order, when you go about your Cookery, and would readily do what you have to do, with Rest and Quietness, without any Confusion or Loss of Time, in seeking that which you need.

And you may even continue in Prayer, whilst you are thus employ'd, in Thinking that you do these Things as God has ordained: because it is Truly he, that teacheth me All these Particularities; by Saying to me, *Serve your Self: Be Neat and Clean, do All Things in Order and in their own Time.* And at another Time he said to me,  
*Take*

*Take Care that Nothing be spoil'd; Put every Thing to Profit : What is more then Enough will be usefull to Others.* And he hath often said to me; *do well that you do :* and one day, as I was earnestly striving to have Something Quickly ended, God said to me ; *not to have done, but to have Well done :* And yet these Words come often in my Mind in Rhyme, \* *Nothing is well done if it be not Perfect, and make not the Man Perfect.*

All these Instructions of my God, with many Others are engraven on my Soul, and I practise them to the Utmost of my Power ; for I never forget Any Thing that God Says to me. But these Persons who are with me hinder me from Obeying my God, and would fain give me their Own Instructions, giving them out for better, than These which God himself hath taught me ; and they often think, I would do better to follow their Advice, than What God hath taught me : Poor Ignorants ! Who would do much better to learn from such a Master, than to controll his Ordinances : as it often befalls you, My Child ; And when I do my self, or desire you to do that Which God hath taught me, you contradict me and alledge your Own Conception as something Better, albeit it proceeds from your Unruly Passion and your Corrupt Spirit, which can do no Good, as I have sufficiently declared to you above.

Wherefore if you were Wise, you would not give me Counsel or Advice, but would hearken Attentively to that Which I tell you in Gods Name, and would keep it in your Heart, to practise it, in it's Season, and when your Spirit transports you, to do or say any Thing Contrary to my Proposal, you ought forthwith to repent of it, asking Pardon of God, for such a Rashness, that knowing that the Spirit of God Governeth me, you would needs instruct him, to give Orders according to your Corrupt Nature ; or, which is worse, you would hinder me from Accomplishing the Will of God in my Behaviour, and give me the Great Disturbance, that I must often give Way to your Passion, and suffer with Regret, my Children to do the Will of the Devil, instead of the Will of God ; as the Devil threatned me at *Sleeswick*, when in the Shape of

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\* Rien n' est bien fait, S' il n' est parfait  
Et ne rend pas l' Homme parfait.

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an Ape he set himself before me, and mocking, said, (speaking of my Children) *They shall do my Will and not yours.*

I advertised you of this, as soon as it fell out to me, concerning which, you replied to me, that the Devil should be a Liar, and that you would do the Will of God, which I should declare unto you, and not the VWill of the Devil. But the Effect hath not followed your VWords, seeing that in Effect, you and the Other Brethren, have since that Time done more of the VWill of the Devil, than ye did before, and have resisted and contradicted me more than ye did at the Beginning, when we were together. And this hath daily encreased to that Degree, that some of you despised What I said in the Name of God, as if they had been frivolous Things, or Passions of my Corrupt Nature, albeit I said Nothing to you, but what God daily taught me : And albeit I used all Means, to cause you to make the Fire by Order and Measure, none of you would ever observe it, and every One followed in this, the Motions of his Corrupt Nature : When he found it Cold, he put on Fire in Excess, so as to put the House in Hazard of Burning, and when the Cold was not sensible, they made the Fire so dull, that others complain'd of Cold : whereof they gave me the Blame, as if I would not allow them to lay on Necessary Fuel. And thus ye have Murmured All together against the Orders of the Holy Spirit.

Now if ye have done it out of Ignorance, it shall be forgiven you, but if ye shall continue to do this out of Malice, and out of Love rather to do the Will of the Devil, (as he hath Prophefied) than Mine, which ye know to be the VWill of God, my VWarnings and Instructions VWill profit you Nothing any more, and All my VWords will be Idle : which I must avoid, conformable to the Commandments which God has given his Children, One of which is, *to avoid Idle Words* : as ye have them written in Great Letters, and cannot be Ignorant of them.

It remains for me to know, if ye will keep these Commandments of God or not, to the End ye may not make me Lose Time any more in Vain. For as for me, I am absolutely resolved to observe All that which God shall make me know to be his Will ; and if ye will not do this also, at least, leave me Free to do it for My Self, without giving me the Hindrances, which ye have given me hitherto :



to : Since God hath Said unto me, *Suffer not any more the Sins of your Children*, I must Obey, and Strive against their Faults, or avoid their presence, that I may leave them to do Evil without my Concurrence : For I Authorise those Sins which are done in my Presence, without Reproving them in those over whom I have Power : And ye have all Voluntarily given me Power over your Souls, to the End I may conduct Them unto God : even with a Promise to obey me, in all that which I shall declare unto you in Gods Name, whilst ye have so often Since, Falsified your Promise, and done the Will of the Devil, instead of Mine : And if God had not given me the Spirit of Strength to resist you, I should have often left the Wilis of God behind, to follow yours, that will still do All Things according to the Motions of their Corrupt Nature, without troubling Themselves with that which is told them in God's Name, which ought to be Dearer and more Valuable to them than all the Treasures of the VVorld, because the Will of God is altogether Holy and Perfect, whereas Mans Own Will is altogether Evil Since Sin.

And ye, My Children, are placed in the Midst of these Two Things, Free to choose Which of the Two ye VVill ; if ye choole to resign your Self to the Conduct of God, ye shall assuredly be Saved : But if ye shall choose to follow your Own VVill, or the Motions of your Corrupt Nature, ye shall assuredly be Damned. Behold how Salvation and Damnation is in your Power, and no other Thing shall befall you than what ye have Undertaken to follow. Never Believe that mischievous Doctrine of Men, which says that God has Elected Some Persons to Salvation and Others to Damnation : because it is False and Lying : For God can never do Evil, nor could he by consequence have chosen any One to Damnation.

Not that I would by these Words ascribe any Impotency unto God as some Ignorant Persons would gather from my Writings, because Evil it Self is Nothing but a Milerable Weakness, which can never be found in God. He can do all Good, and can never do Any Evil, because he will not ; and he has as much Power in not willing something as in willing it : as a Person has as much Power over his own Proper Goods, in willing to give them to another, as in willing to retain them for Himself, albeit he is Wiser in keeping it for his Necessity, than in giving it to An-

other,

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other, whilst he himself hath need of it, when he is Free to do it. And no Body thinks that it is Want of Wisdom in God, for him not to will to do Evil. They are but forged Reasonings to say, that there would be some Ignorance in God, if he did not know, who shall be Saved or Damned, Seeing by his Wisdom he would not know it, Resolving to Create Man (as well as the Angel) a Kind of Creatures altogether Free, without willing to foresee how they shall use this Liberty, leaving every One to act freely in it as seemeth good to himself, albeit his Goodness and his Justice ordain, that *every one shall receive a Reward according to his Works*, as the Scripture also hath it, to the End that no Body may suffer Themselves to be seduced, by the Glosses of Man, it says to them, *According to your works shall you be Judged, and according to your Works shall you be Condemned.* So say I to you, my Children, that your Salvation and Damnation, is in your own Power, by the Liberty wherein it pleased God to create you.

And since God is Unchangeable, he cannot repent of That which he hath once resolved to do; He hath left you Free to submit your selves to his Government, and to his Holy Will; and hath in a Singular Way put into your Hands the Means of suffering your selves to be Governed by him, when he led You to the Knowledge of the Truth, by my Means. You cannot find before God an Excuse of Ignorance or Fear of not discerning his Holy Will, seeing he communicateth the Same so familiarly, even to the Smallest Things.

And it's of small Importance, whether he communicate it to you Immediately or Mediatly by my Means: providing ye have in your Conscience, the Testimony that God makes me to know his Will: This should suffice to oblige you to put it in Practice, without desiring any other Thing, until God find you disposed to communicate Himself unto you: Which he cannot yet do for your Good, because ye are not as yet resigned to Him, to do his Will, when it is repugnant to your Corrupt Nature: *And he who hath known the Father's Will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with Many Stripes:* And as God loveth our Good, he withholdeth his Graces until a Person be disposed to make a Good Use of them; And I firmly believe, that if ye were Effectually disposed to put the Will of God in Practice, that he would communicate it Immediately to you, as he communicates it to me; Since *God is no*

*Respecter of Persons* : He has created them All in the same degree of Grace, and he would govern them all in the same Vertue and Perfection; if Persons had the same Disposition, and the same Will, he would give them the Same Vertue and the same Light Necessary to Salvation.

But the Rebellious Wills of Men oppose themselves to the Graces of God, and make them unworthy to receive them : Just as my Children make themselves Unworthy of my Company, so long as they will not follow the Instructions which God gives me, concerning them. And I never understood so well as now, Why there are so few Persons that Immediately receive the Light of the Holy Spirit. For now I clearly see that I over-charge the Souls of my Children, when I declare to them, the Will of God, and would constrain them to follow it, so long as they will not follow it with Joy : albeit it's Matter of Great Rejoicing, to be able to know assuredly, what is the Will of God, for to put it in Practice. And I have seen the Time, when I would gladly have travelled, even to the End of the World, to find a Person who would have declared to me, the Will of God, because in knowing it, I would have precisely follow'd it ; but I could not discover it because of the Darknes of my Understanding, and I thought that all Persons of Good Will were so, that they did not precisely follow the Will of God, because they knew it not.

But now I find by Experience with Regret in my Children, that they Will not follow the Precise Will of God, because it's often Contrary to the Inclination of their Corrupt Nature, and not for other Reasons, seeing neither Knowledge nor the Means of doing this are wanting to them. And I even go before them, as a Guide that has often travelled this Rode, and know all the Rocks and Dangers of this Voyage, whilst they daign not to advance One Step, to follow me, amusing themselves to advise with their Own Wills or Natural Motions. And when they meet with difficulty, they stop in the Way and proceed no further, leaving me to Walk alone in the Will of God, without being willing to put their Footsteps in mine, forging to themselves in their Imagination that they shall well enough attain to Salvation without observing the Will of God to exactly in small Things, which made me one day ask of God, if it was Necessary that my Children should observe all the Formalities which

he had taught me concerning Houfholding, feeing thefe Things were Trifles and of fmall Importance? and the Lord faid to me: *All the Things which Men have to do in this World are but Trifles, and of fmall Importance; and if they will not obey me in Things fo Small and Eafy, how will they obey me in Great and difficult Ones?*

This made me underftand, that God has no need of our own Actions, but willeth that we fhould prove Our felves, to know, if we be intirely fubjected to the Will of God, and if we be ready to obey him when we difcover his Holy Will, in Things fmall and Great; and that for that Reafon he fays in the Holy Scriptures, *be ye faithfull in Small things, and I will fet you over Great*, giving us thereby to underftand, that if we would have an Eternal Happy Life, we muft obey him in this Life in Small Things, becaufe Men have no great Matter to do here; and that all their greateft Affairs are but Trifles before God: but that he confiders only in All our Works the Obedience and Submiffion we have for him.

For it is moft True that one and the fame Part of our Actions may be Sin and Vertue according to the different Intentions wherewith they are done. For Example, ye may be Neat, Cleanly, and Order your Actions well, for to be efteemed a good Manager, or for Human Refpects, or for Profit and Advantage, and All thefe Ends are Sins: But to do all thefe Things carefully for to obey God, or to pleafe him, all thefe Ends are Vertuous, and will make a Man perfect, albeit otherwife he have Nothing fingular or extraordinary in his Behaviour: it is enough that he fuffer himfelf to be governed by the Will of God in Every Thing, for to be his Beloved and Obedient Child.

And ye need not refort to Univerfities to learn this Leffon: Seeing the fimpleft Peafant in the World may fuffer himfelf to be governed by the Spirit of God in every Thing, if he will fubmit himfelf to him, there are only Three Words to be learned, which are *Submiffion to the Will of God*, Voluntarily and without Contradiktion.

Behold a fhort Leffon, eafy to be praftifed by him who has firmly refolved upon it: for, my Children, all confifts, in Knowing if ye will or will not obey God in Every Thing: forasmuch as in this Point confifts all Perfection and Imperfection, all Vertue and Impiety, yea Life and Death Eternal depend upon following our Own Will or the Will of God: and it will never come to pafs that

one Single Person shall be Saved, dying out of the Conduct of God, and no Body shall ever be damned but he who will die in his Own Will. Wherefore there needs not so Many Books, Studies or Practices for to teach the Way of Salvation, seeing it consists in denying our Own Will for to resign Our selves to the Will of God. And therefore, My Children, leave ye off so Many Books, and Curious Enquiries, so many Sermons glossed by Men, so many vocal Prayers or Meditations of your Spirit, so many virtuous Actions, and many Works which are called charitable: because this Resignation of your Own Will to that of God, will assuredly conduct you into the Way that leads to the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, whither we may all arrive by this single and only Means of Resignation to the Will of God, which she assureth you of,

April 1.  
1674.

*Who seeketh your Good,*

*Anthoinette Bourignon.*

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# LETTER III.

That it is profitable to know our own Corruption.

*To the same Person, when he had resolved absolutely to forsake his Own VWill, whilst he could not peaceably endure the Reproof which contradicted his Own VWill: although it be Good to know this Rebellion of Nature, for to overcome it.*

*My Child,*

I Have seen your Confession, and your Resolution to submit your self intirely to the Will of God in *All* Things: and I shall never ask more, providing ye will make it effectual. But if ye cannot do that, I would rather desire that you do not stay with me, because we would breed Trouble to one another without Profit. For as for me I cannot forbear to do the Will of God, so far as I know it, and when you do not follow it, I must needs tell it you, if I would discharge my Conscience, and that sometimes even with rough words, which thing your Corrupt Nature cannot endure, and rebels against that Correction, blaming it sometimes as if it proceeded from some Vicious Passion, albeit it doth truly proceed from a Zeal to the Glory of God, and a Desire of your Eternal Salvation.

Which you not having well understood, it must be of Necessity that you will Murmur against and Contradict these Reproofs, which Nature is not willing to suffer, because it was created most perfect and Unblamable. Wherefore she defends her self against Reproof, and endeavours to accuse another of the Faults whereof she finds her self guilty.

And you would also have some Reason to do it, in case I had reprov'd you by any Vicious Passion: for naturally speaking, I have no Authority over you, besides that which you shall willingly give me. Neither would I ever have Authority over any body, no, not over my Servants; from whom I would have no Other but voluntary Services, in leaving them always Free to serve me, or to Leave me. And if I do this towards wicked Creatures, what ought I not to do towards the Children of God, who were created Free, as well as the Wicked? So that I will not take away this Liberty from any Body, no, not from the Children whom God has given me, who shall be always Free, for me, to follow me or to leave me when they please. For albeit, they have promised me Obedience, in All that I shall declare unto them from God, I have not promised to them, to declare unto them his Holy Will, except in so far as they will follow it: wherefore I may well forbear, when I see by Experience that they do not follow it, to the End I may not give them Admonitions or Reproofs that are Unprofitable or Unfruitful.

But so long as I see they are willing to accomplish the Will of God, according to their Power, I cannot leave them, because of the Covenant I have entered into with them, which no Body can dissolve, because it is God himself who hath bound it up. And there is Nothing but Sin can separate the Mother from the Children, who notwithstanding has an Order from their Father not to suffer their sins any longer: whereof I have advertised them to the End they may take their Measures thereby and be surprized with Nothing; and if you have for your self, resolved before God and Men to submit your Own Will to that of God, come stay with Me, you shall be very Welcome; for they are such Children whom I esteem and seek after. I will assist them as well in Reference to their Bodies as their Souls: But these who will continue to follow their Own Wills, have Nothing to do to trouble me, or to come near me, for to breed me the displeasure of seeing them live in Sin without being able to amend them. And they likewise have Nothing ado to suffer my Reproofs, when they do not profit their Souls.

I suppose ye understand me well enough for to govern your self accordingly, and so to order the Matter that we be not any more a trouble to One Another. For if you can-



cannot accomplish the Will of God, which he teacheth me, it were better you had a Dwelling separate from Mine, and that you come not near me, but when you shall be disposed to fulfil the Will of God, which I shall declare unto you. And then you shall find me always Joyful and Contented ; But so long as ye shall follow your Own Will, I cannot be at rest in my Soul while I am with you. Wherefore I could wish that ye were near me in doing the Will of God, or that ye were far from me in doing your Own, to the End I may not have the Displeasure of seeing a Thing so Contrary to me, and which I Judge leads Souls unto Hell. For there needs no more but to follow our Own Will to be damned, because that it being born in Sin bringeth forth All sort of Evils, albeit Men do not discover them ; because *the Heart of Man is deceitful above All Things*, as the Scripture saith.

Wherefore you have Reason (as you write to me) to desire a Good Guide, seeing that without it you cannot arrive at the Port of Salvation; and since God has given you One, follow her Joyfully, and not by Force or with Displeasure, as a Slave that is forced to carry the Yoke that is laid upon his Back, for you are chosen to be the Child of God and not his Slave : and this is the Reason why you ought to serve him Joyfully, and to receive with Thankfulness the Orders which he appoints, to put them in Execution. For All that which God ordains us is for our Good, and he doth no ways stand in need of our Observances, but we have need to be taught by him, for to be Saved, because Sin hath reduced Man to so great Ignorance, and that since Sin he walks in so Great Darkness, that he knoweth not where he should set his Foot, unless his Divine Light direct him. Which not having as yet received into your Soul, you ought to esteem it a Great Happiness to be able to receive it by Means of Another, and never to do as the blind Ones of the World, who say that the Commandments of God are difficult, or Impossible to be kept: since they are Nothing but remedies for our Evils, without which our Souls can never be healed of the Wounds which Sin hath given it.

We must of Necessity apply these Remedies to them. Wherefore I greatly rejoyced when God said to me: *that he would teach me all that which the Children ought to do or leave Undone* : but I am sorry to see, that they have

not observed the Will of God after they have known it. And I may Truly say, that I never sighed so much as for this Matter. But I would rejoice at Present, if from this Time forward I should find you to be Children Truly Obedient to your Heavenly Father, as the Natural Mother rejoices after the Pains of Child-birth, for having brought forth a Man upon the Earth. And if I saw one Single Person among my Children born again in the Spirit of Jesus Christ I would no more bewail my Barrenness, and I would think that God had heard my prayer, as he heard that of *Samuel's* Mother after she had prayed in the Temple. And it seems to me that it is in your Power to procure me this Joy, seeing it will never fail upon God's Part. And I have been strongly moved of late to make for my Children a Prayer, which Jesus Christ made for his Disciples, in his last Prayer, saying, *I Pray not for the World, but for those thou hast given me out of the World. They are Mine, because that thou hast given me Them out of the World, &c.* And I pray that God would Sanctifie those whom he has given me out of the World, for they are his, since he has given them to me: and all That which is his, is mine; and all that which is mine is his. I hope my Prayer shall be heard, and that he will not take out of the World those whom he has given me, before they be his True Children, wholly resigned to him, and it shall be then that I shall sing as in the Time of my Youth.

You should never any more believe that I suffer my self to be moved by the vitious Passions of Corrupt Nature, seeing that would drive away the Holy Spirit out of my Soul, who cannot dwell with Sin, and it is he alone who moveth my Passions, and inflames my Choler to oppose it self to Evil, as he inflamed the Wrath of *Elias*, to Kill the False Priests of *Baal*: And I am assuredly more animated by the Holy Spirit, when I am Angry, than when I speak Lovingly; a Thing which Corrupt Nature cannot understand because it esteems it a Happiness to be supported and flattered in its Vices, albeit this is its Greatest Mischief, from which I pray God he may deliver my Children, and that he would always give me the Force to reprove their Sins, and to oppose my self to their Evils. In case this were wanting to me, I could not profit their Souls, nor advance their Perfections according to the Designs of God.

If you have no more to do with *H.* return straight hither; we shall have need of you. *F.* is somewhat better since he returned: but the Flux of his Belly continues, and his Legs swell. I have craved him Pardon in your Name: he says he forgives you most willingly, and that he asks you Pardon of all that wherein he may have offended you. He is in a pretty good Condition, but I could wish he might live a while longer, to the End he might know his own Corruption better, and change his Self Love into the Love of God. in which he labours. And albeit he begins late, yet there is much to be hoped from the Mercy of God. I have received a Letter from *Q. K.* a Prophet of *K.* who seems to desire that I were united to him and all those whom he reckons to be Prophets. But I have Nothing to reply to all his High Conceptions. It were much more worth that he had a Contrite and Humble Heart, than so Great an Esteem of Himself. But that which makes our Time so Dangerous, is that Men do not any more know True Vertue from that which is False and Seeming. Stir up no Body to write to me: this must come of themselves, and they must be moved to this either by God or by my Writings. I do not find it Necessary *M.* \*\* should have my Writings of the *Word of God* before he has seen my other Writings, and known the operations which they have made in his Soul. Nor is it more Necessary that he answer me; he may well forbear it for Humane Respect, so long as he has not overcome that, and so much the rather, that I value Deeds more than Words or Writings. Suffer the Good Seed to grow in those Souls where the Earth is well prepared. God must do it since it is his own Work: For I have no other Charge from him but to present the Light of his Truth to those who will behold it. And I pray God that you may evermore be One of that Number, Whilst I remain,

This 23 of  
August 1675.

Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

L E T.

## L E T T E R   I V .

That we must overcome our Passions in  
this Life.

*To the same Person : teaching him, that it is necessary to Subdue his Passions, and to overcome his Own Will in this Life for to submit it unto the Will of God, when we know it Mediatly or Immediately.*

*My Child,*

I Hope that God will permit you yet to live, for to overcome the Rebellion of your Corruption, because it would not be Good to die with it. I have been told that *Pythagoras* writes that the Souls of Men after Death shall pass into Beasts like unto the Passions wherein they have lived in this World, that an Envious one shall pass into a Dog, a Melancholy one into a Cat, a Luxurious one into a Goat, a Cholerick one into a Lion, a Furious one into a Bull, a Lazy one into and As, and so of the Rest. Which simple Persons understanding according to the Letter, have believed that he means to teach that the Souls of Men do Materially become Beasts after Death: albeit this Man by a profound Wisdom intended to teach thereby that Men who do not overcome their Vicious Passions in this Life, shall have no more Paradise than a Beast: And that their Souls shall be tormented by as many different Torments as they have had Vicious Passions: as I my self also believe, albeit I absolutely Condemn that foolish Belief which Ignorant Persons have drawn from this Comparison which *Pythagoras* made: because it is no wise True that the Souls of Men shall pass into Beasts after Death: But they shall be no better than Beasts before God by dying in there Vicious Passions.

VVhere;

Let. IV. *That we must overcome, &c.* 63

Wherefore we should desire to live so long in this World, until we have Subjected all these Passions unto Reason, and that they have no more the Dominion over our Wills, and that they be intirely Subjected and Resigned to the Will of God, then it would be good to wish for Death, not before ; Because in this Time of Probation there are Means of advancing in the Mortification of our Passions, and in the Love of God, which cannot be done any more after Death ; and therefore I wish that you may live untill I may see you die with Joy.

It is to be regretted that ye cannot Rightly Judge of All that which I say or do, after so long an Experience that God directs me, and that I never dare do any Thing before I have recommended it to God, and discovered his VWill. For when he shews me Nothing of it, I presently desist and do Nothing, albeit all should go to wreck : because I know my own Ignorance and my Corruption, like other Mens, who can never do any Good in following their Own VWillis, no more than I would do in following Mine. For this cause I despise it, and teach my Children to despise theirs, if they would please God, since otherwise they cannot become True Christians.

And if it was needful that Jesus Christ himself should Renounce his Own VWill for to be well-pleasing to his Eternal Father, how much more ought that Person to Renounce his Own VWill, who hath so often found by Experience, that his VWill is Evil, having produced ill Effects, prejudicial to Soul and Body ? whereas the VWill of God is a Tree that brings forth Excellent Fruit, albeit that according to the Judgment of Men, the Things appear sometimes Evil, as that hath seemed Evil to you which I did or said by the Will of God.

Which proceeds from this, that man so much loves himself that he often loves rather to do Evil in his Own Will, than to do Good in doing the VWill of God, the Cause whereof is, that Man being Created Ruler of all the Other Creatures, they ought to do the VWill of Man in All Things. And this Ambition of ruling and making every one obey him remains with him in the Bottom of his Soul, insomuch that he thinks that a Person does him wrong when he doth not his Will, and from thence proceed all the Contradictions that are among us : because I know well that your Will being Evil I ought to contradict it, if I love the Perfection of your Soul ; and if you be-

believed that my Own Will is also Evil in Any Thing, you would have Reason to contradict it also: but I cannot perswade my self, that you believe this in the Bottom of your Soul; albeit I have often seen that your Corruption would perswade it self that I did or said Something that's Evil, in Revenge of this that I reproved your Faults; but this was only in your Inferiour part, and not in the Testimony of your Conscience; which being well examined by you, you shall find the quite Contrary, and Judge that you are in the Wrong, and this Evil often befalls you, to Judge and Condemn Things before you have Examined them, or seen the Cause or the End for which I said or did them, having forgotten that God directs me in All Things; albeit you have sufficient Ground to believe this, because you have seen how he has conducted us since we were together, with what Order he made us come out of *Holland*, and that he seasonably ordered you and F. to go and dispose of your Affairs before the War, how he hath made us change Places and Houses in Convenient Time, how he hath rid us of all these Frislanders without any Trouble; albeit you and F. Judged this to be Impossible, how the Affair of the Children of F, that of — and that of — have succeeded Well, albeit All of them were most Intricate, they have all notwithstanding ended well with Quiet and Repose; a Thing which could not have been done after this Manner by Humane Conduct: and if God had not directed me, we had fallen into all Kind of Miseries and Scandals, and had lost the Money which was at — if I had not resisted you with Violence to cause you to hide it, so that you have as Many Reasons to suffer your self to be conducted by the Spirit that guides me, as any other Person can have: since besides the Testimony of your Own Conscience, you have seen so Many Effects even of Outward Things, which ought to have convinced you, albeit you had had no Internal Light.

Wherefore I cannot comprehend how you can believe that I yet do or say Any Thing that is not Good, having never seen any Evil, and so many Good Things by my Conduct, which is not Mine but the Holy Spirit's: for if I governed my self according to my Own Will, you should not be obliged to hearken to me or follow me, because you are a Free Person, who may do of your self what seemeth Good to you, without asking leave of  
any

any Body ; and for me I desire to Subject no Man in the World to my Own Will : for I have no Need of the Submission or Obedience of Others : and would rather obey All my self, if the Spirit of God did not Govern me : because Obedience to Men mortifies Self-Will and makes it tractable to obey God. And for this Perfection's sake I would love much more to obey, than to command ; if God did not teach and command me himself in Every Thing which I ought to do or forbear, I should be very ready to obey you, and to follow your Will in All things, if it required of me Nothing that is Evil.

But because I am Guided by the Holy Spirit and know that your Self-Will is Evil, I can noways acquiesce thereunto, of necessity I must either resist it or withdraw my Self from your Conduct, that I may not have the displeasure of seeing you violate the Ordinances of God. And this is firmly decreed in my Soul that I will do Nothing directly or Indirectly against the Will of God, no more in Small Matters than in Great. Which Thing I will observe unto Death by the Help of his Grace. VVherefore all these who do not go along with me in this Resolution, need not come near me, and ought not so much as to wish to abide with me, for Fear of defiling my Soul with their Sins, and of hindering me to follow God by the disturbances which they might give me. In case they know that I have Continual Converse with God, they ought to regrave one Moment of Time wherein they hinder me from this so Usefull and Necessary a Conversation, by Discourses about Things Temporal or Unprofitable : such as ordinarily are the Discourses and Actions of Men living as yet to Themselves : who ought not to make me lose Time that is so precious to me, for to entertain me with Trifles or Unprofitable Things, wherewith they are filled, and I can never desire to have converse with such Persons, far less to dwell with them, because they give me Irreparable Impediments, without Advantage to themselves.

For this Cause, my Child, so long as you do not firmly believe, that I am directed in all things by the Holy Spirit, ye should not wish to dwell with me, having seen by Experience that you are an Impediment to me in *Labouring in the Lord's Vineyard* : you ought rather to withdraw from me with Humility of Heart, until you be disposed absolutely to believe and follow the Direction



ction of the Spirit that Guides me : Then my Company shall be profitable to you, whereas it is hurtful to you, so long as ye have Doubts, or an Aversion from receiving that which I say or do to you in the Name of God. For you resist the Holy Spirit, by opposing his Conduct, and it would be a far Less Evil not to Oppose it by Leaving me Peaceably to follow his Inspirations, when you do not believe that they are from him, than to come and oppose them, in believing that they are the Notions of my Own VWill: Seeing I have so often assured you, and assure you still, that I durst never follow my Own Will in Any Thing, albeit it should be carried to Things Good in themselves : it's needful that I first recommend it unto God, before I resolve to follow it, and that God Confirm to me that my Will is his : because I know by Experience that the Devil slips into good things, and that from them he often draws his Greatest Advantages. For this cause I am carefull not to give him hold upon my Own Will, knowing that it is Corrupt, as are the Self-VVills of all other Men, from which No Good Thing can ever come : wherefore if I had One Hair in my Head which would induce me to follow Mine Own Will, or to have any Complacency in it, I could pluck it out Immediately. And also I cannot Love the Persons who will follow their Own Wills, I withdraw from them as much as I can, or from Things that are Evil. Which she assures you of,

*Who Loves your Soul.*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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L E T-

# LETTER V.

That no Good Thing can proceed from  
our Own Will.

*To the same Person, for to assure him that  
he shall never be happy in this World or in the o-  
ther, in following his Own Will; saying, that it is  
impossible for a Spiritual Mother to live with Chil-  
dren, who are not Resigned to the VWill of God  
in All Things.*

*My Children,*

I Have seen by the Letters of \*\*\* and your Letter in *French*  
the Trouble and Regret which you have because you  
commit so many Faults: this proceeds only from hence,  
that you have not as yet comprehended what it is to deny  
Ones Self, know that this means no other things but that  
we must never follow our Own Will in Any Thing; be-  
cause it was Corrupted by the Sin of Adam, it can never  
will Any Thing but Evil: for no sound Things can pro-  
ceed from Corruption. This is impossible. Even so is it  
impossible that Man should ever do any thing that is Good  
in following his Own VWill. For Jesus Christ himself,  
the most Perfect of All Men, prayed his Father, that *not  
his Will might be done, but the Will of God*, which is the  
Only VWill that is Good. And All the VWill of Men,  
even of the Most Holy, are all Evil. And a Person shall  
always do Evil so Long as he follows his Own VWill.  
This is a Certain Thing. And however you pray for to  
have the Grace of God, or the Pardon of your past  
Faults, you will always commit new Ones whilst you  
abide in the desire of following your Own VWill,  
because they are unable to do Good. Albeit God  
should pardon you and me also an Hundred or  
a

a Thousand Times, this will never give a Remedy to Evil; if you do not Effectually know the Perverseness of your Own Will, and have a Hatred, and Aversion for it. For so long as you desire to fulfil your Own Will, you nourish the Serpent in your Bosom which gnaws your Heart, and albeit you see the Faults which you have committed, and regrave them, this doth not cure the Wounds of your Soul. Those Acts of Regrave and Repentance, are only Plaisters for to Mitigate the Sore, not to Heal it.

You know that All Men since *Adam* are born in Sin, Children of VVrath, and Destruction. This is Uncontroverted among Christians. And upon this True Supposition it is Good to understand, that if Man continue in this Corruption, wherein he was born, he cannot be Saved, he must Vapourish and Overcome it for to be Saved. Now No Body can overcome his Own Corrupt Will, if he do not Continually Fight against it, holding it for your Greatest Enemy, as indeed it is; for neither God nor the Devil can do you Ill against your Own Will: because God cannot force it, since he would needs create it Free, nor has the Devil power over your Self-Will, except that which the Will it Self gives him.

It seems you have not as yet comprehended those Things as they are, and that you have continued in the Affection of following your Own Wills without Judging Them so Ill, believing that it was lawful for you to follow your Own Will in All that which doth not appear Evil to you. This is a subtil Device of the Devil, who still deceives you in the Effects: for you see you have oftentimes done Evil, in Things in which you had the Best Intention. This Satan knows that he will always ensnare you so long as he finds you inclined to follow your Own Will, because it renders all our Best Actions Evil, for this Cause we ought to suspect our Own Will in Every Thing, Principally in those that seem Good, when he knows that we will not any more do Any Thing that is Evil, he puslaeth us on to do Good Things hastily, to the end he may draw from these good things Evil Grounds or Consequences Hurtful to our Selves or Others.

As for me I have so Great Experience of these Things that I am careful never to do any the least Thing of my Own VVill. Albeit my Reason should Judg that the Thing were very good, I durst not do it before having  
asked

asked it of God, and if he makes me know Nothing concerning it, I forbear and do Nothing, because my Own Will is as much corrupted as that of all other Men descending of *Adam*, and if I followed this Corrupt Will of Mine I would perhaps commit greater faults than you do, albeit you commit them often, because you have not discovered the Original of this Evil which proceedeth from this, that you love as yet to follow your Own Will.

And so long as you continue in this Affection you will continually fall from one Evil into another, and will never have the Liberty of a True Child of God, who being intirely Resigned into the Conduct of God lives as a Child without Care carried in the Arms of his Father, delivered from the Slavery of the Devil, who can have no hold upon the Person who hates his Own Will as his Enemy, and will follow it no more in any thing, knowing that it is Evil, and gives Power to the Devil to make us fall into Many Evils against our Resolution and Desire. For I know well that you have not a desire to do Evil, but a Resolution to please God. Nevertheless, you do Evil and displease God in following your Own Will, you have passed the Two first Bridges, have forsaken the World, and the Love of the Riches and Pleasures thereof. But you find difficulty to pass the Third, which is to forsake the desire of following your Own Wills. This hath always seemed the easiest to me although it seem the hardest to you, for that you have not sufficiently penetrated the Thing it self, and have suffered your selves Insensibly to be carried away by the Motions of your Own Wills, without discovering that this was Evil, whilst I see no more in you but this Evil which hinders you from receiving the Spirit of God according to your Wish, and which is also the Cause why we cannot live together. For I know that the Will of Man is an Enemy to God, which is the Cause that I cannot give Way to it, no more to my Own than that of Others. And you do not see therein so great Evil to hate your Own Wills, and often believe that I would do better to yield to it than always to contradict it. Which thing I cannot do in my Conscience, knowing that the Self-will of Man lost them All in *Adam*, and that all those who follow it and die in it shall go to Perdition.

How can the heart of a tender Mother suffer her to see with her eyes her Children perishing eternally without Reproving and Admonishing them? It is better that she withdraw her self from them, to let them perish out of her Sight, when she cannot hinder their Falls: since God himself will not force them, neither can I. I suffer them with Regrate, but it is a Force, when they Voluntarily resolve to abide in the Love of their Own Wills. Albeit out of Compliance they are willing to depart from their Own Wills in somethings, these are but particular Acts, which are excercised even by the Wicked, who often break their Own Wills, to please that which they love or would gratifie. This is what I will never require of any Body: for it pities me to see Men do any Thing for an end so base as a Creature, when the same Thing may be done to please a Sovereign God, of whom we hold all Things and from whom we expect a Life of Eternal Happiness.

Wherefore, My Children, do not think that I require any Complacencie or Man-pleasing from you; I would be troubled to see you aiming at that. But I should have a great accidental Joy if I saw that the hatred of your Own Wills were planted in the Bottom of your Souls, and that you were in a Firm Effectual Resolution never to follow your Own Wills any more. Then there should be no more Differences among us. What one willed another would do by the same Spirit of God, which would govern us all without Opposition. But so long as each of you doth yet love to follow his Own Will, there can be no Union or True Concord among us. Every one will think, yea and debate to mantain, that he hath the Better Reason.

Which thing obligeth me to remain at a distance from you, because Conteſts and Diviſions of Wills are great Impediments to my Inward Recollection; which cannot be in God, so long as you oppose me, or I reprove you in things wherein you will needs continue, in loving to follow your Own Wills: which thing I cannot hinder you from doing: But I must of Necessity remove the Impediments which hinder me from hearing the Voice of God, and deprive me of Leisure to converse with him by an Application to Temporal Cares and Distractions, from which I ought to be intirely delivered if we would proceed Rightly and follow the Apostles Order, which was,

that

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that some Other Body should be employed to Minister, to the end that he might attend the better on divine Things: There is a Sufficient Number of us to Order All Things well, if every one would deny himself as Jesus Christ hath taught, and have no Inclination to follow his Own Will. All would go according to the Will of God.

But for want of this denial of our Own Will Nothing goeth according to the Will of God. Which makes me still to bewail my Barrenness with *Anna* the Mother of *Samuel*, and wish that I had but One Child, whether Male or Female: Providing it detested its Own Will to follow the Will of God, it should be very Dear to me. How much more would I rejoice if you were all in that Divine Will? Which I wish from the bottom of my Soul for your Eternal Happiness.

*The 9th of*  
March, 1677.

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F f 2

L E T.

## L E T T E R VI.

That even Jesus Christ himself behaved to Renounce his Own Will.

*To a Lover of Vertue, who believed that there were yet still Many True Christians upon Earth: But did not understand that True Vertue consists in denying our Own Will; albeit Jesus Christ himself was obliged to do this, as is demonstrated to him by this Letter, for satisfying a Difficulty which he had found in the first Part of Solid Vertue concerning this, That Jesus Christ behaved to Renounce his Own Will; thinking that they did not sufficiently Honour Jesus Christ, who believed this. Albeit in the End of this Treatise there is a Letter that proves by the Holy Scripture, how the Self-Will of Jesus Christ was Corrupted even as that of Other Men.*

S I R,

**I** Perceive by yours of the 28th of October, that God has delivered you from the Ordinary Prejudices which are in all sorts of Sects of Religions, and that he has given you the Knowledge of the Corruption of this Miserable Age, to the End you may forsake it in its Conversations Which is no small Favour. Whilst so many Thousands remain stupified in so Thick Darkness, that they know not where they are going in the Way of their Salvation: which is very Lamentable, and very little lamented at present. You wait also for the Renovation of the Church which is marked in the Scriptures by a New Heaven and New



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New Earth, which I also wait for with you; but it may be not after the manner that you understand, since you believe that there are yet in the World many Persons here and there, albeit unknown, who suffer themselves to be governed by the Holy Spirit, and that these are the New Heaven and the New Earth. Whereas God tells me, it's of our Time that he spake by his Prophet, that having looked through the Whole World, *he saw none that did Good*: and repeating the Individual, *not One, not so much as One*. If this be True, where are those Souls governed by the Holy Spirit of which you hope? If there were any such any where, they might well be unknown to Men, but not to God, who continually says to me in my heart, *My People have forsaken me, and there is no more Faith in Israel*; at other times, *They are all abandoned to the Spirit of Error*. And I think I ought more to lay to Heart the Truths of God, than the Good Opinion that Men have of themselves, and others like themselves.

Howbeit I am not Ignorant that there are yet at this present in the World many Persons of Good Will, who aspire after this Renovation, which may be Stones for the building of the Heavenly *Jerusalem*: But it's Necessary they be cut and polished without the Temple, as the Stones of the Temple of *Solomon* were prepared, which was nothing but a Figure of what shall happen in these Last Times, wherein God will re-establish his Gospel-Spirit upon the Earth, with more Christian Perfection than those of the Primitive Church had. This is what all these Souls of Good Will should dispose themselves unto, without believing that they have already received the Holy Spirit, which teacheth you All Truth: Since I clearly perceive how far from True Vertue those as yet are, who call themselves Regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, or those who will Restore *Israel*; and believe they are sent of God for this End, as I have known divers who said, That by them God would renew his Church, whilst those Persons bestirred themselves rather to destroy and discredit the Truth of God, than to build it up or recommend it, by seeking their Own Glory, instead of the Glory of God.

And I fear, Sir, that you have enough of Natural Goodness, to suffer your self to be deceived by such like Persons, by taking a Conduct purely Political for the Government of the Holy Spirit. Forasmuch as they e-

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esteem the Motions of their Corrupt Nature to be the Motions of the Holy Spirit : since we plainly see that they Drink, Eat and Marry, as Jesus Christ hath foretold those of the Last Times shall do. As did also these in the days of Noah, who *Drank, Eated and Married, until they were all drowned by the Deluge.* And I am afraid those Persons whom you esteem, will do the same, since they do yet seek after Glory, Flesh and Money to make the Pot boil. All which Things are inconsistent with the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, which treadeth all these Things under Foot, reckoning them to be Dung and Nothings ; so far is it from valuing them so highly, as, for preserving them, to despise every Thing that doth not contribute to their Designs. It's pity to see Persons of Good Will act after this Manner, instead of esteeming every Thing that cometh from God, wheresoever they find it, without Partiality, as Jesus Christ taught us, when he said of those that did not follow him, *Let them be doing, for he that is not against us is for us.* But those Persons would have every Body to follow and esteem them, even in their Errors : which I cannot do, since God has imparted to me the Light of his Truth, which teacheth me all the Truths which I have need to know ; and therefore I Need not have Recourse to Men or Books for to Learn them.

I Perceive well, Sir, that you do not know the Way whereby God directeth my Soul, seeing *M. P.* tells me that you think I would do better to read the holy Scriptures : Whereas God is pleased to give me a full understanding thereof Immediately by his Holy Spirit. Will you then prefer the Letter that killeth, unto the *Spirit that quickneth* ? It must needs be through Ignorance that you advise me to leave the Fountain, for to draw out of the Streams, when I may have it from the Full Fountain. I know very well that my Enemies not being able to find any Evil in my Writings or my Person, endeavour to draw Evil out of Things that are Good, and to take Offence at the Greatest Favours which God hath bestowed upon me, as at this that God has given me the Understanding of the Scriptures without having Read them in the Letter : a Thing which all Christians ought to admire as an Extraordinary Favour of God, which happens to few Persons ; and of which reality no body can doubt, seeing all my Writings are full of Passages of Scripture, albeit I

never Read them to compose my Writings, as all those of my Company can bear Witness. But instead of praising God for the Graces which he bestows upon his Vile Creatures, they would take Scandal from thence, or give Orders or Counsel to the Holy Spirit, to oblige Him, or the Souls that are governed by Him, to follow the Common Rule which these Ignorants have chosen as Good. I do not marvel that my Partial Enemies, or those who have Spiritual Envy at the Good of Another, would induce me to read the Scripture, to the End they may the better Surprize me by the Words of the Text. But I am astonished that you, Sir, being a Man of an Impartial Spirit, would authorise their Thoughts, by saying, that I should do well to read the Scriptures, and that I have done Ill in Forbearing to read them for 20 Years space; after I had declared in the very Place Quoted by you (to wit in *The Tomb of False Theologie*) that I found in my Conscience, that what God had taught me in the Bottom of my Soul was all one with that Which I read in the Gospel: and that if I would have Written my Inward Sentiments, I should have composed a Book altogether like unto that Gospel. I think that all these Reasons Joyned to my Declaration were sufficient to make all Good Spirits fearing God, Acknowledge, I did well not to stop at the Letter, since I went to God by Means of the Spirit, which doth much more Sanctifie and quicken the Soul, than the Letter that killeth.

Not that I would, for all this, despise the Reading of this Letter, since I commend it to all my Friends; and maintained, when I lived among Catholics, that the Pope could not forbid Christians to read the Scripture, since it is given them by God as a proper Mean for nourishing their Souls: and I do still maintain for an Infalible Truth, that Every One is obliged to use the Means that lead him most to the Love of God, so that those who feel themselves drawn to this Divine Love by Means of reading the Scripture, are obliged to read it over and over again for Nourishing their Souls. But I esteem it much better, if a Person have attained to a Conversation of his Soul with God, who would teach him all that which he ought to do or forbear, without any other Means than his Immediate Divine Inspirations. This Degree of Perfection is much more Sublime and Solid: for that Men easily stick to the Means instead of the End, as we see

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that the Catholicks stick to the Sacraments as the End of their Salvation, and the Reformed in like manner stick to the Reading of the Bible as to the End of their Salvation. In which Both are mistaken. For albeit those should never Eat any Bread but that of the Supper, and these should do no other Thing but study the Bible, yet they shall not miss of being Damned, if the One or the Other die without Charity, which is the Love of God. And All Things besides this Love are but Accessary, and may serve as Means or Hinderances to Salvation. For I see plainly by the Effects, that those who continually Frequent the Sacraments, are filled with Self-Love, giving to themselves Satisfaction and a false Repose of Salvation grounded upon the Sacraments, albeit that Jesus Christ has said in Express Terms that he *who receiveth it Unworthily receiveth his Judgment*. And the Reformed know very well, that *the Letter killeth, and the Spirit quickneth*; whilst they are often greater Idolaters of this Letter than the Catholicks are of Images. To shew that Men may make a Good and a Bad Use of all those things, and that they abuse them always when they take them for the End of their Salvation, or of their Perfection. Albeit it seemeth, Sir, That you would give me the Reading of the Scripture, for the End of my Perfection, since you Judge it Necessary, and take Offence for that I closed the New Testament for the space of Twenty Years after the first Time that I had read it.

I believe those Thoughts did not grow in the Garden of your Soul, but have been presented to you by some other Body as a Sweet Swelling Nofegay, albeit indeed they are wild and of an evil Sent to him that hath Charity *which thinketh no Evil*: and you will needs think Evil of this, that I disengage my self from all Kind of Means to cleave to the End alone, which is the Immediate Love of God, wherein consisteth all Christian Perfection, and not in these Niceties of the Reasonings and Judgments of Men, of whom I make but a very small Reckoning and desire not their Approbations, for that they cannot approve the Good or Vertue which they know not; and to whom may be well applyed that Saying of the Apostle, that *Jesus Christ was a Contempt to the Gentiles, and an Offence to the Jews*: forasmuch as the Conduct which the Holy Spirit follows at present in Reference to the Souls which he governs, is Folly to all those who will be Wile in Them.

Themselves, who take Offence at the Perfection of Those who have received Graces from God wholly Extraordinary and Singular, and would have All Things according to the Level of their little Heads and weak Conceptions, condemning all that which they understand not, for Want of Divine Light.

I perceive, Sir, that ye are almost fallen into the same Weakness, since you write to me in your Letter, that you find so great difficulty in that saying of mine, that *Jesus Christ behoved also to Renounce his Self-will, as all other Men*, bringing this for an argument; *That it is a Lessening of the Glory of Jesus Christ, to say, that he could have his Will Evil, as Man, seeing he was always united to his Heavenly Father*: which is True as to his Superiour Part. For I my self have written, That Jesus Christ never contracted Sin, albeit he contracted all the Curses of Sin, from the Time that he cloathed himself with our Mortality in the Womb of the Virgin Mary. But it is true also, That Jesus Christ, willing to become Mortal Man, did Subject himself to All the Miseries of Body and Spirit, which Sin has brought upon Mans Nature; and that according to it he had and felt in his Natural Will a Rebellion against the Will of God, in the Sentiment, but never in his Consent; and that he fought against this Rebellion which he felt in his Corruption, seeing he himself said, *I am not come to do my Own Will, but the Will of him that sent me*. Now if his Natural and Corrupt will had been so united Inseparably to the Will of his Eternal Father as you suppose, Sir, to what purpose should Jesus Christ have distinguished these Two Wills, and said, *That he was not come to do his Own Will, but the Will of him that sent him*, since those Two Wills would have been but One by this Union which you believe?

For Jesus Christ giveth hereby sufficiently to understand, that his Self-will was Evil, for that he would not follow it, but that of his Father which he knew alone to be Good, as it is indeed: forasmuch as there is Nothing Good but God, and that Jesus Christ himself had no Good in him except that which God wrought in him: So that as God he was altogether Good, altogether Wise, altogether Powerful; but as Man, he was Every Way Frail, as all other Men, from the Time that he voluntarily cloathed himself with our Miseries, by taking a Mortal Body in the Womb of a Virgin: he then made himself Truly  
Man,

Man, of the Corrupted Race of *Adam*, of the same Nature with all other Men, come out of his Loyns : and in this Corrupt Mass there is to be found, a Rebellion of Will against the Will of God ; which All Men feel in themselves, whereof the Apostle complained, saying ; *I feel a Law in me which is against me, and I do the Evil which I would not, and do not the Good which I would* : To shew that from the Sin of *Adam*, there has been Rebellion in the Will of Man, against the Will of God. And it is verified even in the Person of *Adam*, that there was a Rebellion of the Will of Man, against that of God, before his Sin ; since he inclined to delight himself in the Creatures, whereas the Will of God was that Man should delight himself in God Alone, who having Created him to take his delight in Man, he ought in like Manner to have delighted himself in his God, albeit the Rebellion which Man had in his Nature drew him on to act Contrary to the Will of God, which hath lost the Whole Race of Mankind. And if *Adam* in his Innocent and Glorious Estate wherein God had Created him, found a Rebellion in his Will, which he ought to have opposed and contradicted, how much more ought he to do this after his Sin, and how much more ought All Men descended of him, to war against their Own Wills ?

And Jesus Christ being truly Man, as he is True God, could he be exempted from the Rebellion of his Own Will ; being Truly Man, as you believe him, Sir, with all the Faithful, who believe that Jesus Christ is True God, and that he is also Truly Man ? This being supposed as most True, we must Conclude, that Jesus Christ as a Mortal Man behoved to fight against his Own Will, and that he contradicted it with so great Violence that he thereby sweated Blood and Water in the Garden of Olives, where he saith also, to express his Wrettlings, *My Soul is Sorrowful even unto Death* ; and saying to his Father, *not My Will Lord but Thine be done*, after that his Self-will had prayed, *That this Cup might depart from him if it were possible* : and even being upon the Crois he saith, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* ?

And if this Union of Will had been so Inseparable as you, Sir, think, how could he say that he was forsaken of his Father in the Agonie of Death ? Or how could he say, *I commend my Spirit into thy Hands* ? Where no Division could be, there was no Place for Recommendation, being

being able to Comfort and Save himself without any Recommendation. Could he Truly say, that he was forsaken of his Father, if he had not found in his Inferiour Part, a Separation of his Will from the Will of God? He could neither believe nor say, that he was forsaken of his Eternal Father, Seeing his Superior Part was never divided from him one Moment; for if it had never so little departed from him, he would assuredly have fallen into Sin as other Men. Whereas it may be said to the Praise of Jesus Christ, Exclusively to All Others, that he never Sinned, and that his Soul did always continue Spotless, under the Frailty and Rebellion wherewith he was pleased to load himself, for the Love which he did bear to us, doing as a most Faithful Brother, who throws himself into a Sink of Impurities, to deliver his Brother from Thence, whom he seeth perishing without his Help and Assistance.

For Jesus Christ, according to his Human Nature, is truly our Brother, sprung from our Common Father Adam, and he saw in the Bosom of his Father that we were all perishing in the Mire of our Self-will: for which Cause he threw himself into it, that he might draw us out of it, and deliver us from these Dangers. Would you, Sir, reckon it a Dishonour if your Brother should willingly throw himself into a Jakes to deliver you from thence, when without his help you would never come out of it, and would have perished therein Eternally? Would you not rather be obliged to Honour such a Benefactor, and to value as precious Stones the Impurities which he had contracted to deliver you from Death? How then can you think it a Dishonouring Jesus Christ to say, that according to his Human Nature he had a Will which was Evil in it self, tho you hear in his Prayer how he saith to God, *that his Will may not come to pass, but the Will of his Father*? For if his Self-will had been Good, he would rather have thanked his Father for permitting it to come to pass.

Surely, Sir, all these Things are so Clear and Evident, that it's Matter of Astonishment; how any can find Difficulty therein. But Men are so blind in all Things that they can discern Nothing Rightly, and judge of God and his Works as if they judged of their Equals, seeking to ascribe Honour to Jesus Christ by the Contempt which they bring on his Person: since he would not be so valuable



ble in his Humanity, if he had not in it a Will rebelling against the Superiour part of his Soul : for in that Case, he would have had Nothing to fight against, and by Consequence could not carry the Victory, which belongs only to Victorious Combatants, and not to those who by Nature are at Rest and without Enemies. And if Jesus Christ had not been pleased to take on him our Corrupt Will, he could not have suffered, because in that Case all his Sufferings would have been insensible to him, by this inseparable Union with God, who is as Impassible as Immortal, and of Necessity this Divinity of Jesus Christ must have been separated in some Manner from his Humanity to work our Redemption ; for that abiding in this perfect Union with his Divinity he could not satisfy for Man, since Man himself owed this Satisfaction to his Divinity ; seeing he alone had done Evil against the Will of his God, it was needful that he himself should repair it, but not that God should satisfy himself for Guilty Man, seeing God being Independent from All Things, had no need of Men or their Satisfaction : But Jesus Christ as Man, being the True Natural Brother of Men, was pleased for the Love which he did bear to them, to Load himself with the Miseries and Sins into which they had willingly plunged themselves. And I think, Sir, you will find in Scripture, that Jesus Christ *was made Sin* it self for Men. By which, Nevertheless it is not meant that Jesus Christ did ever Sin, or actually follow the Rebellious Will of his Human Nature, because he never did that, neither in his Glorious Estate nor during his Mortal Life, having always continued United to his Divinity as to his Superiour Part. But the Inferiour and Mortal Part gave him many Combats and Assaults, which Jesus Christ behaved to resist : For we read, that the Devil tempted him after Divers Manners : And if Jesus Christ had not had in him an Evil Will, the Devil would not have been so foolish as to tempt him, knowing well that he gains Nothing upon Men but by the Consent of their Evil Wills, and that he could never have gained upon the Self-will of Jesus Christ, if it had been without Rebellion, or as the Will of the Angels of God. The Devil hath too much Subtilty to discover all these Things, and would not have spent his Time in Tempting Jesus Christ, if he had not seen that he was Truly a frail Man as Others, from the Time he had cloathed himself with their Mortality,

taliry. And likewise Jesus Christ could not, in Equity, say to Men as he had done, *Be ye Followers of me*, since their Rebellious Wills could not attain to the Perfection of a Will altogether Holy and United to the Will of God, as you believe, Sir, that the Will of Jesus Christ was. And how could Jesus Christ say, with Truth, *He that believeth in me, doth the Works that I do, yea and shall do greater?* And we see, that the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus Christ have actually done more Miracles and wonderful VVorks than Jesus Christ himself did. How then could it be possible that the Rebellious and Corrupt Wills of the Apostles, and other Regenerated Persons, could do more Good than the Pure and Holy Will of Jesus Christ, which you believe never contracted Rebellion against the Will of his Father? And if God demanded of Men an Imitation of Jesus Christ, in case he had not had Rebellion in his Human Nature, he would require things from Men Impossible, as some Erring Persons would suppose, by saying and Preaching, That it's *Impossible to keep the Commandments of God or the Gospel Law*: and albeit these be Blasphemies against God, many believe them, because this Doctrine flatters their Corruption, and makes them live Peaceably in their Sins, and Remisseness, upon the False Supposition that a Man cannot keep the Commandments of God nor Imitate Jesus Christ; which is more contrary to the Holy Scripture than that which is in my Writings to shew that Jesus Christ fought against his Own Will: since we find in so many Places thereof that Jesus Christ despised Himself, and condemned all that which favoured his Humanity; he saith sometimes, *I am not a Man but the Reproach of Men*; now if there had been no Evil Thing in his Self-will, he would Truly have been a Perfect Man and not a Reproach of them. And when they would have praised his Humanity by saying, *Happy is the Womb that bare Thee and the Paps which gave thee Suck*, he answered them saying, *Blessed are they who hear the Word of my Father and follow it*. To shew that the Virgin Mary his Mother was not so happy for having contributed to the Formation and Nourishment of his Humane Body, as she was happy for having heard the VWill of God and followed it.

VVhence it appears that Jesus Christ would not be honoured in his Corruptible Flesh, as Men think it a Happiness to have contributed thereunto, or to have come near

near it, as if it had been a Perfect Thing without Corruption or Rebellion against the VWill of God his Father : On the Contrary he makes them understand, that All that which he put on in this Mortal Life, is but Corruption no ways to be Esteemed ; that even to bear the Name of his Mother and his Brethren, is Nothing in Comparifon of doing the VWill of God his Father, which Alone is Holy Privatively to all others. And the VWill of Jesus Christ himself, of his Apostles and of all Persons living in the VWorld, although they be Regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, they All have in themselves their Evil Wills, and all their Vertues and Perfections confift in resisting them Manfully, which they ought to do unto Death ; for albeit they have overcome their Own Will by Force of Resistance, it's Nothing but asleep or deaden'd, and may awake or revive by diverse Accidents. For this Cause the Regenerate Person himself is always to fight against his Own Will even unto Death, in which Respect the Apostle saith, *Our Life is a Continual Combat* : and Jesus Christ sufficiently sheweth that he had need to fight against his Own Will even unto Death, when toward the End of his Life he yet prays, *That His Will may not come to pass, but that of his Father.*

But, Sir, If ye cannot Comprehend these Things, leave them for those who shall Comprehend them. Take from my Writings only what is Usefull and Profitable for your Soul ; holding the rest in Suspence, untill God shall give you some Light about them. For there be Many Things in my Writings, which it is not Necessary for the Salvation of many to understand : and it is better to adore the VVonders of God, than to comprehend them when they are not Precisely Necessary to Salvation. The Practice of Things Necessary is much more usefull, than the Knowledge of those Things which we understand not. It is alwayes better to be able to love God well, than to speak well of Vertue.

For me, I never study to speak well, and make no Reflections on the Terms or Comparifons which I sometimes use. It's enough to me that I can make the Lights, which God imparts to me, to be Understood, in Terms Easie to be conceived ; albeit I know that Critical Spirits endeavour to surprize me in my VVords, I do not regard their Surprisals, but the Reality of the Truth which I  
main.

II. Let. VI. *That even J. Christ himself behoved, &c.* 83

Cor- maintain ; Since I write nothing to Please Men, or to  
Fa- draw Honour or Profit from them : But I write intirely  
that to accomplish the VVill of God, who hath sent me into  
Cor- this VVorld, therein to carry the Light of his Truth to  
the those who will receive it ; if you find it in my VVritings ;  
in Sir, you are obliged to follow it, and if you do not find  
the it there, ye shall not find it elsewhere, since there  
the is but One Truth which proceedeth from God ,  
all which is All the Same wherever it be found. But  
ene- you must walk upon your Own Feet if you would  
Per- follow it : For if you lean upon Another you shall  
they fall when he falls. But if you shall read my VVritings  
ome with Attention and an Impartial Spirit, you shall, with-  
but out doubt, find there the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit ;  
verse since I never had Another Master but him, and being the  
him- Servant of Jesus Christ, I seek not to please Men. I some-  
unto times Name *Peter* for *Paul*, without being willing to a-  
is a mend such like Faults, because, I know the Time is come  
with that *God will destroy the Wisdom of the Wise, and will serve*  
un- *himself of that which is Weak to confound the Strong.* There  
ays, can be no Harm in it, that Men discover by my VVritings  
Fa that it's an Unlearned Person that speaks, who will not  
leave reflect upon Terms and Studied VVords, but simply incul-  
from cate, *That all the Perfection and Salvation of Men consists*  
your in *Denying themselves, and giving up themselves to be Govern-*  
give ed *by the Will of God,* which you may believe of her who  
ings calleth her self,

S I R,

The 11th of  
November 1676.

Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

LE T

## LETTER VII.

That the Self-will of Children ought to be Mortified.

*To a Father of a Family, teaching him how he ought to contradict the Self-Will of his Children, to make them Happy in this World and in Eternity, by habituating them from their Younger Years to deny their Own Wills if they would become True Christians.*

*My good Friend,*

I WAS glad to see by yours of the 16 of November this year, that you Praise God, for having found in my VVritings, and yet finding dayly so many Profitable and VVholefome Instructions, because I doubted if you were content that you have forsaken the Miserable VVorld, to find Rest to your Soul. The Gardener who had your House and lived in it, is gone out of it long agoe, and hath Intirely forsaken it. He could not find what he expected by staying there, for the World grows dayly worse, Lying and Deceit encreateth ; so that no Body can sell or buy any more without having the Mark of the Beast : That is to say, without defiling his Soul with his Own Sins or the Sins of Others.

For this Cause a Person should reckon himself Happy when he can find his Necessary Food out of the Miserable Hurry of this Miserable World, and live in Quiet in serving God a-part. I think you value the Happines Sufficently, not to suffer your self to be tempted by the Devil to forsake it, for if you found the World wicked heretofore, you shall find it yet worse at present. I did not doubt of your Perseverance, nor your Wife's ; but I was afraid lest the Tender Affection which you bare to your Children, might hinder your Perfection, for that you do

do not sufficiently know, how much the Nature of Men is corrupted by Sin, and is become Evil to such a degree, that there needs no more, but to follow it for to go to Hell.

Now for resisting it, we must do Violence to our Selves, and contradict every Thing that Corrupt Nature desires, refusing it that which it loves most. This is somewhat troublesome to Persons of Age, who by long Custom have inured themselves to follow their Own Will; but Young Children are more tractable to comply with Reason, when they are Governed by it, they do as easily that which is Good and Reasonable, as that which is Evil and Intemperate. This depends upon the Good Conduct of those who have the Charge of them. For a Child is like Soft Wax on which you may impress what Seal you please, and if Christian Vertue were stamped upon them from their Tender Age, they would follow it with as much Joy, as they do their Corrupt Nature, which is Insolent and never Satisfied or Content, but still desiring that which it hath not. For this Cause the Fathers and Mothers of Christian Children, ought to govern their Children according to Reason, and to give them their Necessities by Weight and Measure, without following that to which they are inclined, because that Natural Inclination is always Vicious, and if you suffer these Vices to grow up with the Child, you will find it very difficult to amend them, when they are become Strong.

Wherefore I advise you, to Govern your Children well, and to give them only that, which you clearly see to be Necessary for their Maintenance, without asking them, what they would have or what they would not have: but to make them Contented with that which is Good and Wholesome for them, without giving them, through too great a Fondness, all that they desire, seeing their Desires can never be Good, as proceeding from their Corrupt Nature, wherein they are born, as All the Children of Adam, who are Children of Wrath and Sin: and if during this Mortal Life they do not overcome this Corruption, they dy Children of Wrath, and perish Eternally.

And therefore if you love yours, you must Govern them according to the Will of God, and not according to their Own Appetites and Perverse Wills. For if you

shall govern them well according to Christian Perfection, they will bless you in Heaven to all Eternity: But if you suffer them to follow their Own Wills, they will despise you in this World, and curse you to all Eternity: Because Fathers and Mothers have so much Power over their Children, that they can Damn or Save them, so long as they have not yet attained to the Use of Reason. Hence it is that we see so many Histories, of Young Children possessed of the Devil, by the Evil Wishes of their Fathers and Mothers: who may likewise greatly contribute to their Salvation, when during their Tender Years, they instruct them in the Christian Doctrine, exercising their Manners in the Practice thereof, that being so accustomed, this Practice is changed into Nature, and makes them happy both in this World and that which is to come; whereas if they shall be suffered to follow their Corrupt Natures, in their Younger Years, it will be hard for them to alter this, when they are come to the Use of Reason, and see that they are not True Christians, but follow their Natural Inclinations as Beasts do, who seek after that which is most Beautifull and Best, and most Agreeable to their Brutal Senses: which is not a Christian Life, seeing Jesus Christ has taught them *to denie themselves, to drink the bitter Cup with him, to take the Least, and the Last Place*, which are all Things repugnant to Corrupt Nature, which must of Necessity be Renounced if they would become Christians, since Jesus Christ himself denied his Own Will to give them an Example, and he saith, *We must take up the Cross and follow him to be his Disciples*.

Now it concerns you, My Friends, to know if ye be resolved to become True Christians or not. But if ye wish this Happiness to your own Souls, prepare it also for those of your Children, and habituate them in their Tender Years to deny their Own Wills. Never give them What they desire, when ye see that the Thing which they desire is not Good or Necessary. Break their Wills as much as ye can, and ye shall make them Happy in Time and Eternity.

Seeing there are so many Noble Persons and Persons of quality, who break the Self-will of their Children in All Things, to make them esteemed among Men, how much more ought a Christian to do this, for to make their Children acceptable unto God? And these Parents dare not  
some-



Sometimes give their Children as much as they have need of, for fear they become too Gross: Others dare not suffer an Easy Garment for their Bodys, or Shoe for their Feet, to be made for them, for Fear they grow too Big: they make bare their Arms and Neck, even in the Time of the greatest Colds, and the Children suffer All this willingly, because it seems Good to their Parents, who sometimes Mortifie them so much, that they eat not a Morfel according to their Own Will.

A Countess of a Good Family has often told me, that her Mother did so Mortifie Her in her tender Years, to render her Tractable in Every Thing, and to make her appear Virtuous at Court, for having overcome all her Passions and Inclinations: That she would not suffer her Daughter to eat of the Meat which she Loved; and how soon she did cast her Eye on any Dish of Meat, that was upon the Table, the Mother caused it Immediately to be removed, to the End her Daughter might not taste it according to her Appetite. Her Feet likewise were so little and round, that she was scarce able to go, because they had made her always to wear little narrow Shoes. She told me that her Mother sometimes promised, to go out to walk with her, or to make some Visit to her Relations or other Ladies, and when the Daughter had dressed her self for this purpose, and thought to step into the Coach with her Mother, testifying the Joy she had to go and divert her self, the Mother would send her back to her Chamber, saying to Her, be gone, you shall not come with me to Day: Which did so greatly afflict the Daughter that she went to weep for some Hours in Secret, for if she had weep'd for this in her Mothers Presence, she would have beaten her. This Lady told me, that her Mother had often spit in her Face; telling her, that she could not find a fitter Place than that ugly Face, and this to make her Humble and Patient in all Rancountres, that she might be thought well Educated by every one, because her Mother had the Reputation of the best bred Lady at the Court of *Brunelles*: She was desirous that her Daughters should inherit this Reputation of Civility beyond all the Ladies; and for that Effect she formed them in their Youth, such as she would have them to appear in the World, and endeavoured to make them Happy, by being able to suffer all things without Trouble, after being well mortified in their younger Years. And all these Mortifications had not

marred the Health of this Lady, seeing she was in good Case, of a Cheerful Humour and Good Complexion, affable to every one, well ordered in her Eating and Drinking, having drunk Nothing but Water until the Third Year of her Age : She never eated before Noon, at which Time she took a good Meal of one or two Dishes, leaving all the rest of her Table for Strangers or her Servants.

I saw all these Things, because I stayed some Years with her eating at her Table : And I have related all this to you, to the End you may not fear to prejudge the Health of your Children, by denying them what their Corrupt Natures desire, since this Ladies Constitution was not weakened by so many Mortifications, but continued strong and robust, beyond that of Persons, who are suffered to follow their Own Wills in their Youth, by giving them that which they desire : For we commonly see spoiled Children, who are suffered to follow their Own Wills, to be Languishing, Lean and Perish, and I know by Experience, and by having governed a great Number of Children in the Hospital of *Lisle*, that Children and other Persons keep their Health much better by living regularly, Eating and Drinking moderately, and of common Fare, taken at the ordinary Time ; than those who follow their Appetites, by Eating unseasonably, or of dainty Meats, or abundance of Meat and Drink. For I have many times received into that Hospital, Children descended both of Rich and Poor Parents, who had been equally accustomed to Eat and Drink at all Hours, when they had a Mind to it, or to have Meat and Drink according to their Taste, and would not Eat this or that, forbearing to Eat when they had not Dainties according to their Fancies, while in the mean Time, they appeared extenuated, of a yellow Colour, and Pale, like Decaying or Sick Persons : But after I had kepted them Three Months in the Hospital, nourished with common Fare, and well ordered in Time, as all the rest : These Children who before were spoiled, became healthy and cheerful, changing their Colour, and growing sensibly better, after they had done some Violence to themselves in the Beginning, and I had constrained them to submit to the Rules appointed for doing every Thing. For I did not suffer any to Eat or Drink out of Time, but precisely at Eight a Clock in the Morning, at Twelve a Clock of the Day,

and Eight a Clock at Night. At other times, no Body eated so much as an Apple, for when any Fruit was brought from their Parents, it was carried to the Buttry, and set on the Table at Meal time before her for whom it was brought, who distributed the same to her Companions as she thought fit, but could carry nothing away from the Table, the rest being laid up in the Buttry till to Morrow. I likewise caused them all to rise and lye down in Summer and Winter at the same Hour, readily to pray to God, and to Work all together at the appointed Time, without any Partiality or Exception. And I found by Experience, that this Government of a well ordered Life, gave good Health to all those that were under my Charge, and they were contented and merry after they were accustomed to the Rules of the House. No Body murmured at it, and every one took well with it, even those who had been accustomed before, to Eat and Drink, Sleep and VVork, when or how they pleased: And many of these Young Maids whom I placed in Service, with the Inhabitants of the Town, gave me Thanks, for having so reclaimed their Natures, that they were for that Cause loved and contented where they stayed, as their Masters and Mistresses also came often to thank me for giving them so Good, Sober, and well Ordered Maid-Servants, because this is rare among Poor People, since they often spoil their Children more in their tender Years than the Rich, believing that they do them Good by suffering them to follow All their Wills. VVhich is a great Abuse, since on the contrary, it is really to do them great Evil, and to make them Miserable in Time and in Eternity.

For a Child that is not broken in his tender Age, will not willingly be subject to Another when he is grown up, and would always follow his Own Will as he has been accustomed, and likewise will not be content with the Fare which he gets elsewhere, when he has been used to Eat that which his Corrupt Nature loved best at Home. This Change must needs be somewhat troublesome to him, whereas the accustoming to a good Rule makes him Happy, and Contented wheresoever he may chance to be; and to Eat Course Meats with as good a Stomach, as those that are Delicate, Regarding nothing but Necessity after he has overcome Sensuality.

And beside this, a Person well mortified in his younger Years, will live virtuously in this World, so as to have Eternal Life with little Travel: Because Mens Moral Vertues are great Advantages to Divine Vertue, as being materially the same, and needing nothing but a Change of the Object, by loving Vertue and Mortification, to make us acceptable to God, instead of loving the same Things to make us acceptable to Men: As that Lady did of whom I have spoken before: who, had she made God alone the Object in her VVay of Living, would have been a Great Saint, by Reason of the Advantages she had by being well mortified in her Youth, which thing is the greatest Happines you can procure to your Children: For if you leave them Money, or other Earthly Riches, that is but a Corporeal Good, which oft-times, yea, and for the most part causeth their Damnation. For the Children who are accustomed to follow their Own Wills in their younger Years, would follow it in every thing when they are of Age, if they have the Means to do it: And if they be used in their tender Age, to Eat and Drink at all Hours, according to their Appetite, they would hold on this Course after they are grown up, and will spend in Excess and Luxury, all that which their Fathers and Mothers have saved, yea, sometimes seek to have Money by unlawful Means, for satisfying their Sensualities or Self-wills.

Behold then how Fathers and Mothers oft-times contribute to the damnation of their Children without adverting thereto, whilst in the mean time they shall be damned themselves for not having governed their Children well, albeit of themselves they have led a Good Life: as we read that *Heli* the High Priest was punished of God, who broke his Neck by falling backwards, through displeasure when he heard, that the Ark of the Covenant was taken and his Two Sons killed. And every one knows that this Man was of a very Good Life, and that he was not chastised for his own Sins, but because he had not chastised his Children for their Misdeeds, but had only told them mildly, that they did ill and offended the Lord, without correcting them for their ill deeds.

And if this Sin of Omission was so exemplarily punished in a Holy Man, how much more will the Negligences be punished, which Fathers and Mothers commit in

in Relation to their Children, whom they love so tenderly, as to suffer them to follow their Corrupt Natures, to make them miserable in Time and Eternity, through too great Tenderness, being unwilling to mortifie them in their Youth. Surely they ought to expect Eternal Chastisements on this Account, for that they Sin diverse Ways in their Children, some by Counselling them to do Evil for their Revenge, and others by Tolerating their Evil, some by Defending it, another by Praising or Flattering it, others by Abetting and Maintaining it, others by not Hindering it, others by not Revealing it, or Sharing in it. Lo Nine Ways, whereby one may sin in another, taken from the Scriptures, which in sundry scattered Places declare those Things, while almost no Body adverts thereunto; albeit all Fathers and Mothers commit them in their Children, when they advise them to avenge themselves, when any Body does them Hurt, or they Induce them to do any Evil to their Neighbour, or Esteem them for doing any Evil Action, or Defend them and Es-pouse their Quarrel when they have done Evil, or Suffer them to do Evil in their Presence, or with their Knowledge, or do not Hinder them to do Evil when it is in their Power.

But Men now a-days are so blind, as that they not only do not see all the Sins which they commit in Another, but also teach their Children to sin in their Youth, without thinking that they do Evil; yea, they believe that they give a Testimony of their Friendship to their Children, by inculcating Sin upon their Souls from their tender Age: Since that, how soon a Child is born they cover it with Rich Cloath, carrying it to Baptism covered with Gold, Silk, or Embroiderie: And how soon he begins to have his Eyes open to behold Vanities, they show them to him in prising them as Beautiful, that they may entice this tender Heart to covet them: And we see plainly, that the Corruption of the Childs Nature taketh Delight to see any thing that is Beautiful and Shining, even before it have any Sentiment of Reason, because of the Inclination to Evil wherein Man is Born, which vicious Inclination the Parents cherish in stead of Rooting it out, as they would do if they were True Christians, and would say with *David, Turn away mine Eyes O Lord, that I may not behold Vanity*: Whereas Christians now a-days turn the Eyes of their Children towards Vanity, as soon as

they are opened : And they rejoyce to see their Children, recreate themselves at the Light of a Candle, or in beholding some Sparkling Thing : Whereas these Parents ought to be sorry to see, that Sin hath rendred Man so Miserable, that he is inclined to it from the Moment of his Birth, and turneth his Affections to every thing that is pleasant and agreeable unto his Brutish Senses, whereas he ought to direct them towards his Creator.

But because Parents do not Penetrate into those things, and live themselves according to their Brutish Senses, they suffer their Children to follow their Footsteps, yea, incite them to sin more than their Nature is inclined, by Praising to them Vanities, and every thing that is Beautiful and Good to the Senses, before the Spirit of Children be capable to Love them themselves : For if they Cloath them with any white Linnen, or some Fashionable Stuff, they tell them over and over again, that this is pretty and the Child is fine, to the end, that by these Commendations and Praises, the Child may imprint on its Heart the Vanity of being Fine, and the desire of being well Cloathed : They do the same in Relation to Meat and Drink, which they give not to Children according to their Necessities, but according to their Sensuality, saying to them, *Good, Good, O how Good is it ! How Delicious is it ! Eat, it is so Good* : And by those Means they urge them to take with Pleasure Delicate Morfells, and to delight in them, settling their tender Affections upon them, instead of settling them upon God : And they grow up, thus turned away from the Love of God, for to place all their Affections in Drinking, Eating, Cloathing, and other Sensual Things, so that none are inclined to Love God. Hence it cometh that Persons advanced in Age, know not what it is to Love God, because they were not taught this in their Youth, but to Love themselves and the Pleasures of all their Senses, according to which they Live and Die, without apprehending the Danger of their Salvation, thus living as the Beasts, by seeking after that which is most Beautiful and Best, according to their Appetites and Desires, as if they had no other Felicity to expect, but the Sensual Pleasures, which they can taste in this World.

Poor Christians ! That do so little follow the Footsteps of their Master Jesus Christ, who to give them an Example, did choose of All Things for his Use, the smallest

Smallest and most Despised, the Least, and that which is most Contrary to the Senses of Corrupt Nature : Whereas those who will be his Disciples, take a quite contrary Way, and Chuse the most Beautiful, the Best, the most Honourable, the most Easie and Pleasant to Corrupt Nature, and withal they call themselves Christians and Disciples of Jesus Christ, expecting to enter into his Glory after this Life, which will certainly fail them ; since no Body shall follow him in his Glory, if he hath not first followed him in Reproaches, in Pain, Labour, Contempt, and all kind of Crosses in this World : Which he himself declares, saying, *He that will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross and follow me.* This hath proceeded from the Mouth of Truth it self, that cannot deceive nor lie.

Wherefore My Friends, if ye would become True Christians, Exercise your selves in the Practice of the Mortification of your Senses, and Endeavour likewise to Exercise your Children therein while they are young, to the end ye make may them happy in this Temporal Life, and that which is Eternal, where they shall bless you to all Eternity, if by these Means ye shall be the Cause of their Salvation : Whereof she assures you, that Loves your Soul and theirs. In wishing this I remain,

The 13th of  
December 1676.

*Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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L E T-



## L E T T E R VIII.

That Solid Vertue doth not consist in  
Good Internal Motions.

*To a Person that had particular Motions from God inwardly, not knowing if they came absolutely from God, from the Devil, or from Nature: Who is taught, that good Motions are Knocks which God gives at the Door of Mans Heart, to see if he will Correspond by the Mortification of his Senses, and of his Self-will: Which if he do not, the Soul continues vain and without True Vertue.*

*My Friend,*

**BY** yours of the Fifth of this Month I see, *That you feel in your Soul strong Motions, and desire to know if they come from God, because of the Dangers of Anti-christ: Which ought to be feared; for at present, he seduceth much under the Appearance of Vertue and Holiness, whereby the best meaning Persons are seduced and deceived by the Devil, who imprints upon their Spirit, that they have already attained to a Disengagement from Earthly Things, yea, to Regeneration: Albeit, as yet they have not acquired in their Hearts one Solid Vertue, and do not so much as know what True Vertue is: Which consists in the Renouncing our Own Wills, for to leave Our Selves in all things resigned unto the Will of God, so as not to follow Corrupt Nature in any Thing any more. And if you be in that Estate, you are without Doubt to believe, that the Motions which you feel in your Soul come from the Holy Spirit. But if they do not produce in your Soul such like Operations, you must*

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so long suspect these Motions and not follow them, but in so far, as they induce you to the Love of God and Hatred of your self.

For to rely upon some sensible Sweetnesses, or some fine Speculations of Divine Things ; there is yet Danger in this, even albeit those Sweetnesses, and Good Thoughts did come from God, because Nature always flatters it Self, and the Scripture saith, *That there is Nothing more Deceitful than the Heart of Man.*

Which thing I still find by Experience more and more ; for I know Persons who esteem themselves Vertuous, because they have some good Desires, or believe they are Regenerate, because they have a desire to be so ; Which are nothing but Amusements of Satan, who endeavours to fill the Understanding of Man with false Hopes, that do not produce their Effects, to the end he may make them spend their Life in Spiritual Negligence, and Live and Die in the Corruption, whereinto they are fallen by the Sin of *Adam*, that they may never attain to the true New Birth of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is the most cunning Device of Satan, wherewith he makes many to Perish, albeit of Good Will and Desirous of Vertue. Hence it is said in the Proverb, *That Hell is Paved with Good Wills.* Albeit, these be necessary for attaining Salvation, yet Men will not be saved by them, when they do not put their Good Wills in Execution to the utmost of their Power.

For a Good Will is Nothing but a Good Motion, which God puts in the Soul, to see if it will faithfully correspond therewith or not. And if God did not give this Good Will, Man could never have it of himself, for that of himself he is evermore inclined to do Evil, and never to do Good : although it be True that Man doth often feel in himself Good Wills, they come immediately from God, without Mans being able to produce in Himself those Wills, or so much as One of them. And it is God who of his Pure Mercy gives them unto Men without their being able to deserve them in the Least : yea gives them sometimes unto great Sinners, who in the midst of their Sins, often feel Good Desires to forsake Sin, and be converted unto God, with many other Good Wishes : because *that God desireth not the Death of a Sinner, but that he be converted and live* : for this end he never fails to give unto  
Man

Man Good Desires, yea Occasions for doing Good ; but it's Mans own Fault if he do not co-operate with these Good Desires which God hath given him. For as it is Gods Work to inspire Good, so it is also Mans Work to execute the same Good wherewith God inspires him.

Not that Man of himself hath the Strength to execute the Good Inspiration of God, in regard he is so corrupted, that he can do no Good without a particular Grace, or the Increase of new and continuall Graces : But it is most certain, that God on his part giveth and continually augmenteth his Grace to him, who truly seeks and desires it : which thing he promiseth in the Scripture, saying *Be ye faithfull in a Little, and I will set you over that which is Great.*

For if a Soul were faithfull to the Good Will, which God gives for to become a True Christian, it would assuredly find all the Means of doing this, by embracing the Gospel Law : But if a Person of Good Will, will needs continue in the Sentiments of Corrupt Nature, without being willing to renounce the Same, it's impossible that he can become a True Christian, albeit God often give him the Desire and Will thereof.

For God will force no Body, after he hath created All Men Free. He inspires them, and draws them by good Motions, which they ought to follow of their Own Free Wills and without Constraint, by taking and seeking of themselves all the Means which may lead them to this Christian Perfection. And in doing this God will assist them, by augmenting his Grace, Strength, and Light every Moment.

But if that Person neglect to seek him, he shall not have the Grace to find him : wherefore the Scripture saith, *He that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

God always knocks at our Heart first; by Good Desires, and by his Divine Light makes us to see the Vanity of the World, the Looseness of Christians, the Wickedness of Men and the Danger that is in conversing with them. And when all these things are discovered by our Understanding, it's God who hath knocked at the door of our Heart, for to awake us out of the Sleep of Death. And he strikes yet more forcibly, when he gives us the Desire of forsaking the World, and coming out of the Dangers

Dangers thereof, that we may not partake in its Sins. And God strikes this Third Blow on the Heart of Man when he gives him the Resolution to become a True Christian.

Behold all that God can do on his Part, to draw us to him : But if Man turn a deaf Ear, and do not embrace the Means to follow these Lights, and to effectuate these Good Desires ; God ceaseth to knock and to give new Strength, limiting his Graces to the first Correspondence, which the Soul makes to the first, to which having faithfully corresponded, the Soul shall always feel new Strength, and an Augmentation of Light and Grace by the Goodness and Mercies of God.

Wherefore Men greatly deceive themselves, to expect an Augmentation of Grace, so long as they do not correspond with the first, since God has promised to set those over Great Things, who have been faithful in Small Things.

I see, My Friend, that you are willing to correspond with the Grace of God, since you have forsaken the World, to follow Jesus Christ. This is to have passed the First Bridge, For to come at the Heavenly *Jerusalem*. You must endeavour also to pass the other Two, that you may not perish in the Way and die in the Wilderness, without ever coming to the Land of Promise, with the Children of Israel, who had (as you) also past the First Bridge. I perceive well that you are walking on the Second, and that your Heart is in Part disengaged from Covetousness, more than your Father in Law, and that there remains no more for you to do, but to pass the Third Bridge, of the denial of your Own Will, which is not as yet wholly submitted to the Will of God : And you have yet many Self-wills to overcome.

And therefore you must intirely submit your self to the Will of God in Every Thing, without being willing any more to follow your Own in Any Thing. And becaule you do not declare to me in particular, what are these Motions of your Soul, I cannot judge whether they come of God or not.

But as to the Perswasion you have, that as the Virgin *Mary* carried Jesus Christ in her Bowels, so I carry in my Soul the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this is most true. For I have received of the Father, in my Understanding, the same Spirit which his Son Jesus Christ had. Wherefore you may well hearken to it, without Fear of being deceived

ceived. And it matters little where you shall be, or what you shall do, providing that in all Things you follow the Truths contained in my Writings, which are Dictated by the Holy Spirit and not by me : Whereof she assures you,

The 17th of June.  
1675.

*Who loveth the Perfection  
of your Soul,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

## LETTER IX.

The necessity of renouncing All Things  
for to be saved.

*To a Doctor, who had discovered the Light  
of the Truth, by the Means of her Wholesome  
Writings, having in his Soul a Desire to  
Practise Vertue, to whom is taught the Necessi-  
ty of passing Three Bridges for coming to the  
Heavenly Jerusalem.*

S I R,

I Have seen by yours of the 20th of July, that my Writings have made some Operations in your Soul, and given you a Desire to forsake the World, and to pass the Three Bridges necessary, for coming at the Heavenly Jerusalem, which thing is not a Humane Work, but a Gift and Grace of God for to draw you to himself. Be faithful to his Call, and do not turn a Deaf Ear unto this internal Voice : For God begins nothing which he doth not accomplish, when he finds no Opposition in the Free Will of Man.

I am willing to believe, that God will make Use of my Writings, as a Mean to have you for himself, since that by them your Heart hath been touched. Wherefore I advise you to read them often, and you shall find them delicious Food, for nourishing your Soul. It is a Heavenly *Manna*, come down from Heaven to nourish the Children of God, so long as they travel in the desert of this World, that they may come to the Land of Promise.

This *Manna* is not mine, nor made by Human Industry, but descendeth dayly new from Heaven. Happy shall he be who shall feed thereupon, forsaking the Venomous Herbs of the Doctrines of Men, which have already poysoned so many Souls, when they have founded their Salvation upon Human Appearances, or upon a Theologie forged in the Imagination of some Men, who were the Authors of Novelties and Changes in Religion: forasmuch as these spake of themselves, and did not receive their Knowledge from the Holy Spirit, having erred in many Things, and those who succeeded them, have followed the same Errors, as if they had been Truths: whereby Men have become still worse, and farther estranged from God: So that we live at present in an unhappy Age, wherein a Lye is commended and the Truth is despised: Wherein Men cannot any more discern the Truth of God from seeming Truth.

For this Cause it is, that God out of his Infinite Goodness, and by his Last Mercy, which he will shew unto Men, doth at present send them the Light of Truth, which shall teach them all Truth. This is that Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus Christ, which should come in the last Times, in which we live at present: Wherein all those, who shall be disposed, shall receive this Holy Spirit in Fulness, and shall in full Perfection understand, what the Apostles understood only in Part.

I think, Sir, you will easily discover by my Writings, that this Glorious Day is at its Morning, and that it will arise upon our *Horizon*: For the Time is come, that God will renew the Earth, and Men shall revive unto a New Spirit, in which Righteousness shall dwell in the House of God. He will lead them in All their Ways, *They shall be his People and he shall be their God*, As the Prophet hath said, I know that God will reserve a little Corner in the World, where his People shall assemble, to serve him

in Spirit and in Truth : But I have not as yet found True Children, intirely abandoned to him. I have Children who have passed the First Bridge (whereof you speak to me) and have forsaken the World, their Countrey and the House of their Father, and are going also upon the Second Bridge, not being willing to trade any more for gaining of Money, or other Temporal Good Things : But are not as yet free from all Sort of Covetousness, loving themselves still, and coveting diverse things for their Accomodation, without having well comprehended that the Apostle saith, *That all kind of Coveting is Sin* : which Thing is good to be understood, since God hath created us only for to Love him ; we sin as many Ways, as we carry our Affections to other Things than him : and we always have an Affection for that which we covet, and by Consequence we sin as often, as we withdraw our Affection from God, to covet any Other Thing. And a True Child of God must covet Nothing any more, and be always content with that which God gives him without desiring any Other Thing. This is a thing which Corrupt Nature will not hearken to, but is still inclined to covet that which it hath not, and is never fully satisfied with that which God sends it, so long as it hath not passed the Second Bridge of Covetousness, upon which My Children walk without being come to the End of it as yet : and after it, have the Third Bridge of the denying their Own Wills to pass, which seemed to me the most Easie and Pleasant to pass of All the Bridges : whereas they find it at present the most Difficult and Heavy.

For they find this denying of their Own Wills so contrary to the Inclination of Corrupt Nature, that it seems to them Impossible, to attain thereunto : which hinders them from entring into the Land of Promise : Since no Body shall enter there, but those who shall have intirely Renounced their Own Wills, to the End they may be entirely submitted to the Rule and Conduct of God : for without the Wedding Garment of this Submission, we must expect to be driven out from the Marriage Feast, as unworthy to have entred there ; and it is to be feared, that those Persons shall receive the Sentence of the Parable in the Gospel, which was given to him who had entred into the Banquet, without having put on a Wedding Garment, to wit, *Take him, bind him Hand and Foot to be cast into Eternal Fire.*



For it is most certain that no Body shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, by following his Own Will; for that it being corrupted can bring forth no other thing but Sin : and that God will say in his Judgment, *Depart from me you that do Iniquity.* all ye

Wherefore you must strive to pass the Third Bridge for to enter into the New *Jerusalem* ; and if God has given you a desire to forsake the World, and to pass this First Bridge, he will give you strength to pass the Other Two, if you continue Faithful to him in passing the First ; in which you have Advantages, since (as you say) you are not Married nor engaged in any Charge. I shall willingly assist you therein, if you will follow the Doctrine that God teacheth me, which alone leadeth to Salvation. For there is no other Way of attaining thereunto, but by that of denying our Selves, and imitating Jesus Christ. My Children had not sufficiently discovered this before they had followed me ; whence it is that they find so much difficulty in it at Present. But you who desire to leave the World, to become a True Christian, do forsee All the Passes that must be passed, before you resolve to follow me, to the End, that, with *Lots Wife*, you may not look back after you are come forth out of *Sodom*. I am well pleased that you Read my Book of the *Word of God*, if it be useful to you, and that you keep it Secret. You will find there more Remedies for the Diseases of your Soul, than you have found Remedies in Medicine, for the healing of the Body ; which Remedies are always doubtful, yea, have already caused Many Persons die, because the Doctors do not know the Secrets of Humane Nature : They often give to their Patients Remedies contrary to their Distempers, and throw them Headlong into Death by their Ignorance.

Wherefore I would wish you to become a True Physician of your Soul, and that you would endeavour by Degrees to cure all the Wounds thereof. This is much more profitable than to gain a little Money, by Visiting the Sick, for your Subsistence, which God will always give you, if you be Faithful to him ; as he hath promised in so many Places of Scripture, where Jesus Christ saith, *Seek the Kingdom of God, and the Rest shall be given unto you*, and elsewhere, *Labour not for the Meat that Perisheth*. He adviseth likewise *not to Care for to Morrow*. All these Promises with so many Others, should make you to hope

that God will provide for you, providing you seek after Nothing any longer, but the Kingdom of God and the Righteousness thereof, which is also promised to you in his Name, by her who continues,

S I R,

The 26th of July. *Your very Affectionate in Jesus Christ*  
1675.

Anthoinette Bourignon.

## L E T T E R X.

That all Good Men ought to be subject  
unto the Will of God.

*To a Child of God, for to advertise him,  
that God doth at present make known his Will  
in every Thing, for those who will follow it,  
but that they fail in Obedience to it, which  
makes them unworthy to receive it any more.*

*My Child,*

I Fear the Children will render themselves Unworthy of the Conduct of the Holy Spirit, by refusing to Obey it. For I know the Will of God, and the Children do not follow it, doing often the quite contrary: So that the thing will come to pass, which the Master in the Gospel said to him who did not profit by his Talent, of whom the Master said, *Take from him the Talent, and give it to him who hath Two, that he may have more.* All my Children have received a great Talent from God, in being chosen for his Children, with a Promise, That he will make them know his Will by my Means: But they profit nothing with this Talent, when they are not subject and obedient to the Voice, that speaks unto them, and rather follow the Will of the Devil and the Inclinations of their

Corrupt

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Corrupt Nature, than that which I declare unto them from God.

I have now done All that I could to bring them to God ; but they will not follow me in the Way of Eternity, and I am still forced to Travel alone in my Internal Way, because I have no Body that follows me effectually. They are nothing but Wouldings and Imperfect Wills, which they have to follow me, without making them effectual. They say to me often, *As you please, and we will obey you* : but when I ordain the least Thing, be it never so good, they do the quite contrary. I have long supported their Sins, in Hope that they would forsake them for my Patience sake, and that they might not breed me any more Trouble : but they have abused my Patience, and have come to that Height, that now they despise my Admonitions, or seek to charge on me the Faults, which they commit, when I reprove them : So that I can contribute Nothing to their Salvation by doing this ; and my Presence would serve for their Greater Condemnation, when the Lights that God gives me are not profitable to them.

It's better that I retire from them, and leave them to follow their Own Wills alone, than to have the continual displeasure of seeing, that in my Presence they do the Will of the Devil in Contempt of the Will of God which they know. I know very well, that this doth not proceed from Wickedness, but from Frailtie, since that in the Bottom of their Souls they have a Desire to live well and to obey God : but I cannot see that my bodily Presence will further them in Vertue : On the Contrary it will give them a false Repose, by thinking that All goes well with them, when they are with me. It is the very same Reason for which Jesus Christ said to his Apostles, That it was necessary he should leave them Corporally, promising them, That he would send them the Holy Spirit, who should teach them all Truth : because they should not be tied to his Person for receiving this Holy Spirit. And I also say the same to you, My Children, that it is Necessary I leave you for some Time, to the end you may learn to flee to God alone in your Adversity, and that you may learn to eat Bread as Men, without hanging still on the Breast of the Nurse, who hath suckled you so long as Little Children. Suffer now a little, that others drink the Milk of Divine Wisdom, in

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their Turn. Not that I will abandon you or leave you Orphans : for I will still have a Care of your Souls to bring them unto God ; But I desire that you should trie your selves without me, to the End you may find by Experience, that it is not my Imperfections which have made you sometimes Murnure against me ; and may learn with the Hermite, who was often Angry with his Brethren, thinking they gave him occasion to be so, untill with much Importunity he obtained leave of his Superior to go and remain alone in the Desert ; where being tempted with the same Passion, he brake in a Thousand Pieces the only Pitcher he had, wherewith to go and fetch Water to drink : which did greatly humble him, when he saw that All the Evil was in Himself alone, and not in the Imperfections of his Brethren, to whom he returned and served, and loved them afterward with Love and respect all the Dayes of his Life.

I pray God, that my Bodily Absence may work the same Effects upon your Souls : for God knows, that I have not absented my self from you but by his Holy Will, yea for the Perfection of Your Souls, which I love as much as my Own : and would expose my self to procure it unto you, and shall pray God that he will give it to you All, whilst I continue,

At Hufum.  
1675.

Your Mother in Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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LET.

## LETTER XI.

That Men Love Evil in their Own Will, more than Good in the Will of God.

*To a Child of God, teaching him how he ought to behave himself in every Thing, and Principally to accustom Himself to the Denial of his Own Will.*

*My Child,*

Our Brother \* \* is come here with Provisions, and a Memorial to buy that which you have need of ; But it seems to me, he has no Desire to return into *Nordstrand*. He is wearied with Labour, and his Aunt complains, that he is become Thin, for she regards only Flesh and Blood, which things must be mortified before the Spirit of God live in the Soul : But Natural Persons understand only Carnal Things, and no ways that which is of the Spirit of God. It were a Loss that this Young Man should go back, after having so fairly begun and almost passed his Year of Probation, which is the hardest of all. I cannot tell if ye have been too severe a Master to him, or if he wanted any Thing, or if he has laboured too much. For I believed that he was abundantly well satisfied, according to his Letter which he himself had written to me. Nevertheless I suspect there is too much Work in *Nordstrand*, for Persons that are not accustomed to Labour. My Intention is not to make Persons Labour too much : For tho' a moderate Labour be necessary, excessive Labour wearies the Body and Disquiets the Spirit. If you think that you have too much Work, or too many Beasts, you must have less of Both. I had a purpose to have some Beasts at *Sleswick*, but in this Persecution I

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know

know not what to resolve. I thought likewise that many Persons would have come to *Nordstrand*, to whom I should have given a Part of my Lands and Beasts: But that not coming to pass, we must keep the Charge of the Whole, until God shall otherwise Dispose of it, and quietly do that which we can, leaving the Rest behind.

For I would not approve, that you should disquiet Your Self for outward Things. We must indeed take Care that Nothing be spoiled or lost, and do All Things in Order, as God appoints: But we must undertake Nothing, but that which we can well do with Order and Quietness of Spirit. I would gladly let out Land for the Half, as I have done heretofore: But then I could not give Employment to all those who are not fit for Writing, and by this Means could not any more receive any Person out of Charity, I not having any more Employment to give them, and they also being unable to continue Idle without Sinning: Since God has enjoyed Labour to All Men in General, it is necessary that every one accomplish this Pennance, if he will satisfy the Justice of God and be saved. For this Cause I know not what to resolve concerning this *Nordstrand*; because I know not what People I can assist there. I must hold my Resolution in Suspence for some Time, until God shews us some other Thing. I believe that \*\* will be fully as fit for *Nordstrand*, as \*\*, because he is more accustomed to Labour, and that he may by Degrees Learn Husbandry. I strange, that that Calf of a Year old is drowned. You must consider if a Remedy may be found that this happen not any more, by putting the Beasts near the House, or hindering them from entring into the Water except at one place. If I were there, I think I would find out some Remedy: But having never been there, I can say nothing determinately of it. I am afraid still that some Body has bewitched the Sheep; if that be not, you must endeavour to make them breed, that you may have their Young Ones in the very Beginning of the Summer, and then those Young Beasts will grow better and become Fat on the New Grass: Men always Learn well by Experience, if they will take good heed thereunto.

You must not likewise be discouraged with Losses, nor even when you commit Faults: But you must strive to remedy them as much as you can, and take from the  
Hand

Let.XI. *more than Good in the Will of God.* 107

Hand of God, that which falls out, without being troubled : For the Devil would make Use of those Troubles or Discontents, for to make us look back with *Lot's* Wife. Wherefore we must take Courage and Humble our Selves before God for the Faults we have done, that he may give us Grace to do no more in Time coming. You have done well in buying Wood to enlarge the House. You must take a Carpenter and work with him, for it is very ill done to undertake any Thing which we cannot perform.

It is a Presumption of Corrupt Nature, which readily boasts that it understands All Things ; when in the mean Time, it can do Nothing, but spoil that which it takes in Hand. A Humble Heart is always afraid that it misfeary, and will undertake Nothing but that, which it is sure God hath given it the Grace to understand well. I mean not for all this, that a Man should do Nothing besides the Trade which he hath Learned. For a Christian should Learn to do all Things, that he may not be obliged to depend upon Worldly Persons, who do not help us without Sinning, or make us to Sin with them : A Thing which we must shun as much as we can : But not so far as to spoil those Things whereof we have need, rather than employ some Skilful Work-man. For we must of Necessity take them, to the End, we may Learn from them, to do All Things Necessary, Rightly, in time coming, that we may not depend any more upon those Strangers. This would agree well with the Will of God and my Intentions, which the Children have not well understood as yet, and often run from one Extremity to another spoiling All, or doing Nothing : Albeit, the one of these Things be as bad as the other. For by spoiling things whereof we have need, we do great Dammage, and are not assisted in our need ; and in not doing our Endeavour to Learn, we shall never be delivered from these Worldly Persons, and shall be always obliged to Coöperate with their Sins.

Which thing hath often bred me Displeasure and Scruples, from which I desire to be delivered, and to see the happy Day, when we shall have no need of the Wicked any more. Which would give me great Repose and Tranquillity of Spirit, for to attend better on Spiritual Things, in being delivered from those that are Temporal, and from the Trifles of House-Keeping, which should be-



108 *That Men love evil in their own Will, &c.* Part II,  
long to some other Body than me, if we were all rightly  
ordered.

But alas ! the Devil keeps me busie by Force, about the  
little Cares of House-Keeping, which I cannot leave,  
without seeing All Things go contrary to the Will of  
God, and the Orders which he hath assuredly given me,  
in Relation to Things both Small and Great. But this  
Mischievous Corrupt Nature will not yield to the Will of  
God ; loving always better to do Evil in its Own Will,  
than to do Good in the Will of God ; by which it ap-  
pears, how much it is an Enemy to it self ; by suffering  
so many Evils, Losses and Wants, Labour and Travel, for  
to accomplish its Own Will ; whereas the Will of God  
would procure it All Good Things, Advantages, Peace and  
Quiet of Conscience, with Infallible Pleasures and Tran-  
quillities, without ever doing Evil in doing the Will of  
God ; since it is altogether Holy and Perfect ; and I know  
it dayly and declare it by Word and Writing. It is just  
Matter of Astonishment to see how long the Children  
have been instructed in that Holy Will, without fulfil-  
ling it exactly in All Things.

I imagined, that Men neglected the Will of God,  
because they knew it not : But I have seen clearly  
since, that it is the obstinate Wickedness of Corrupt  
Nature, which hinders this Obedience to the Will of  
God, and that it will rather Rule than Obey. What  
poor miserable Creatures are we, who daily see our  
Miseries, and do not redress them in so good an Oc-  
casion, as we have in knowing the Will of God ? We  
might well, with *Job*, curse the Day of our Birth, when  
we consider the Miseries of Body and Spirit, to which  
Sin hath reduced Man, that he doth the Evil he would  
not, and not the Good which he knows and wills. Sure-  
ly there is little Ground to be proud of it, in seeing  
ones self so miserable, that he doth Evil thinking to  
do Good, and esteems himself happy in following his  
Corrupt Will, which makes him miserable.

Were it not much better never to be born, than to live  
after this Manner, even unto Death ? Since in such a  
Case we shall have two Hells : Whereas if we would  
take pains, to mortifie this Corruption, for to subject  
our Will intirely to the Will of God, we should assured-  
ly have Two Paradises, one in this World of Peace and  
Repose of Conscience, which can never have more Joy,  
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Let. XII. *That we must submit our Own Will, &c.* 109

than to know that it doth the Will of its God : and the other in Eternal Life. I pray God that he may make you attain to this Happiness, and likewise all those who have forsaken the World, for to serve him the better. In this Wish I remain to you all

*Your Mother in Jesus Christ,*  
The 17th of May  
1676. Anthoinette Bourignon.

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## L E T T E R X I I .

That we must submit our Own Will  
to the Will of God in Small things.

*To a Person who was resolved to forsake  
the World, and to deny her own Will: promi-  
sing to assist her in this, and to make her see  
the Will of God, in things Small and Great,  
even in the Affairs of House-keeping.*

*My Daughter ;*

I Have seen by your Last, that you are intirely resolved to deny your Own Will, for to follow the Will of God, and that you believe you would do this better, being with me, than among the People of the World: Which I must acknowledge, seeing Opportunity makes the Thief. For by seeing, that almost all Persons reckon themselves Happy in following their Own Will, we follow it also insensibly, for that we have not discovered, that our Self-Will is always Evil, and there needs no more, but follow it to go to Hell : Because that being Born in Sin, it can bring forth Nothing but Corruption.

Wherefore you should be Happy if you could accomplish so Holy a Resolution, as to submit Your self  
in

110 *That we must Submit our Own Will* Part II.

in All Things to the Will of God. This is the Abridgement of all Christian Perfection ; for which cause, Flesh and Blood could not have revealed it unto you : This Resolution must needs come from the Holy Spirit, to whom you ought to be Faithful. And as you think there is no better Mean of attaining to Perfection than to be in my Presence, I am very willing that you come to me, if this will lead you to God. I shall declare to you his Holy Will in All Things? It will be your Part to observe it well.

I have no Need of Service for my own Person, because God has given me the Grace to serve my self ; but our Brethren have need of you, that they may be supplied with Necessary Things, which often hinders me in the Spiritual Works that concern the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls : Wherefore I have often wished to have a Maid to deliver me from the little Cares of House-keeping, but could never find one hitherto. There are enough who are capable of this, but they go about Household Affairs after their own way, without being willing to observe the Formalities, which God enjoyns me ; who teacheth me things Small and Great. VVhich things Natural Persons cannot comprehend, and they will needs do, as they have been accustomed, believing that they do better than that which God would have them do. And thus I cannot teach them, because they will not learn : But if you truly be submitted to the VVill of God, you will learn sufficiently ; for they are not Things hard or difficult for him who will please God, since he can teach none but Good and wholesome Things, that tend to our Good.

But I must acknowledge that Nature finds a Repugnancy hereunto, by Reason of its evil Habits : For I found a Repugnancy in divers things which God hath taught me. I was accustomed to do all my Affairs, according to the Abundance in which I was Born, and not to trouble my self about Small Things, nor for that, that they were lost, or spoiling through Negligence. I reckoned it a light Thing, and of small Importance, to order all things precisely in their Season, loving better to do them according to my own Motions and Inclinations, and so to follow my Own VVill in All Things, seeing no Evil in doing thus, until it pleased God to teach me Precisely and Particularly Things  
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Let. XII. to the Will of God in Small Things. III

necessary, by saying to me, *Do all things orderly, and in their Season: Put all Things to a good Use: Let nothing be spoiled.* With many other particular Instructions, which I have begun to write, to the Number of Seven Articles; and I believe there will be Twenty of the like Nature, which I lay to Heart and observe, so far as I am able: But my Children have not as yet attained to this Observance, and they Relapse often into their old Customs: And when I would have excused them before God, by saying to him, that those things were of small Importance, and Trifles, he said to me, *That Men had Nothing to do in this World but Trifles,* teaching me thereby that *they ought to be Faithful and Obedient in Small Things, and that their Greatest Affairs are but Trifles before God:* Towards whom there are no Small disobediences.

This is what I thought fit to advertise you of, before you come to me, to the End, you may not murmur, when I shall give you Orders concerning Small Things, and that you may know that God teacheth them to me, as well as his High Mysteries, to the end, I may teach these Small Things to my Children, to make them worthy to be placed in Great Matters, if they be faithful in Small Ones, as saith the Scripture, *Be you faithful in Little Things: And I will set you over Great Ones.* I have a desire to employ you in Household Affairs, because that will be very useful to me, and I have no other Employment to give you, and you cannot continue Idle, since God has ordained all Persons in *Adam*, to gain their Living by the Sweat of their Brow, and it is necessary that this Ordinance be fulfilled in all those who will be Saved; every one Labouring according to his Capacity and his Condition. I hope, you will reckon it your Happiness to serve the Servants of God. I think also that your Labour shall not be too heavy for you, because in many things our Brethren serve themselves; and tho' I love Cleanliness well, yet I do not Love Curiosity, nor to see things done that are Superfluous, as are ordinarily those of *Holland*. Wherefore I hope, you shall find here Exercise suitable for the Body and for the Soul, if you continue in the Submission of your Will to the Will of God, and that you shall easily pass the Three Bridges altogether. Having forsaken the World, Covetousness will be no more dear unto you, and your Own Will being subdued, you shall

112 *That we must renounce the Eases* Part II.  
shall easily come to the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, which she  
wisheth you,

The 25th of *August*.  
1675.

*Who loveth your Soul.*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

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## L E T T E R XIII.

That we must renounce the Eases and  
Pleasures of Nature.

*To a Person, who desired to become a Christian, but could not comprehend, that True Perfection consists in Bodily Labour, for accomplishing the Penitence given to all Men in Adam, nor also, that it is necessary to deny our Appetites, and to Mortify our Own Will.*

*My Child,*

I Was glad to understand your safe Arrival with little *Dirick*, and all the Provisions; but I am sorry to hear, that the Meat and Work doth not please you, since I cannot change that. I gave the Charge of Governing these Affairs to *Clas Floris*, that he may dispose of them according as he finds convenient; and I am not present to see my self how he doth; for this Cause, I cannot give him a particular Rule for his Behaviour: he must do as he understands, seeing he is a Man of Spirit, and of Conscience, to do nothing amiss: But it may be, he hath more Zeal for overcoming corrupt Nature, than others have.

In which he excells you; since being free to take the best, he is willing to content himself with that which is mean. And this should serve you for an Example, rather than an Occasion of murmuring, since he being Old, doth willingly that which you who are Young do unwillingly:

lingly: for you know that he came out of the same Kitchen out of which you are come, where Men studied to take the best of every thing, for to satisfie Corrupt Nature; and hath cast himself of his own accord into an abstinence from these things. For being alone, he might have drunk VVine and Milk; and nevertheless was willing to content himself with VVhey and Butter-Milk, having eaten very little Flesh and Eggs, during so severe a VVinter, in which they behoved daily to remove the Snow, ere he could get out of the House. In short, his Life has been nothing but Labour and Mortification, for overcoming in himself the Flesh and the World, which he had forsaken, to become a Disciple of Jesus Christ.

And you have also forsaken the VVorld for the same End: will you not then use the same means, which he found so advantageous, that he wrote from the bottom of his Heart, that he wished to have the same Labour, and the same Solitude all the Days of his Life?

VVherein he testified, That his Penitence was Voluntary, and not Constrained or Forced: But it seems that yours is not such as yet, and that ye endure Labour and Sobriety unwillingly; which must needs be troublesome to you; since Nature doth then suffer much, when it cannot have that which it desires.

But these Sufferings are mitigated, when Men ask their Reason, why this Corruption suffers, and for what End? And Reason Answers; That it is to overcome your Corruption, and to save your Soul; this should make all Contradictions light, since Life Eternal well deserves that we should do some Violence to our selves; which Life Eternal no Body can obtain, without resisting this Corruption, which was Condemned in all Men by the Sin of *Adam*, and shall be to all Eternity, as the Devils, if in this World we do not master and overcome it.

For this Cause Jesus Christ hath so oft told Christians, that they must deny Themselves, that they must take up their Cross and follow him, and elsewhere he saith, *That he who saveth his Life shall lose it, but he who loseth his Life shall find it*, That is to say, that a Christian must lose his Animal Life, or Mortify his Corruption in this Mortal Life, for to find a Life Eternally Blessed: But that he who will save his Corruption in this World, by giving it all the Nourishment it desires, shall lose an Eternally

114 *That we must renounce the Eases* Part II.

Eternally Blessed Life till all Eternity, which the Scripture assureth saying, *He that loseth his Life shall find it: And he that saver his Life shall lose it.*

But because Men do not understand the sence of the Scriptures, they believe that they do no Evil, in having a good care of their Health, and that it's Prudence to take the most Beautifull or the Best, and to give to this Corruption its Eases and Sensual Appetites: albeit this is an Antichristian Doctrine, quite contrary to the Doctrine of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and to the Practice of the Ancient Fathers, and of the Christians of the Primitive Church: instead of which, the Apostles speak of Nothing, but of Labours, of Suffering, of Torments and Persecutions, since Saint Paul Boasts, that he Laboured more than all the rest together, and that with his Labour he had gained Bread for himself and others, that he had been so often Scourged, Imprisoned, and lived in Anxiety and Fear: and that he had Suffered Hunger, thirst and weariedness; and that he himself had Chastised his Body, to bring it unto Subjection; Fearing, lest while he Preached the Gospel to others, he himself should be Cast-away

How is it Possible, that he who would become a True Christian, should not Remember all these Things, and the Ways wherein the first Christians walked, who forsaking all, did willingly expose themselves to the want of all Temporal Things, embracing the Lowness and Poverty of Jesus Christ, tho' Poverty brings many Hardships, and inconveniences a long with it? Those that are Desirous to follow Jesus Christ, did not Fear all these Things, but embraced them with Joy, and Practised them with contentment.

You have read, My Child, in what Austerities the ancient Fathers Hermites of Egypt and Thebais lived, most of whom lay upon the Naked Earth, eating Nothing but raw Herbs and Roots, going bare Footed, being Poorly Cloathed, enduring Patiently the Great Colds and Heats of these Desert Places; Some carried great Stones all the Day long, from one Mountain to Another, to beat down their Bodies; others lay Naked in the Snow for the same effect: the most part eated but once a Day after Sun-set, esteeming themselves happy when they had Water for their Drink; In short, they Performed Pennances almost Insupportable to Nature,  
some



some of them having died by too much Suffering: for we read of a Novice, whom his Master treated so severely, that it was believed, he died thereof: And when another went with his Master to his grave, and asked him if he was Dead, the deceased Novice answered from his grave, No, my Father; for the truly Obedient never Dies. And albeit this Master was to be blamed for his Severity, yet the Scholar did greatly profit his Soul thereby.

This example, My Child, should encourage you to Suffer the litle Labours or Inconveniencies, which you find in the Service of God, since you Desire to be Saved; as well as those that endured so much, for to overcome the Corruption of their Nature. And since God doth not require such Austerities and Pennances of you, and hath not given you a Master, who beats you on the Head till you become deaf (as it fared with that Young Scholar) suffer willingly and with Joy the accidents that happen, and when your Meat or Drink does not please your taste, Bless God, who (it may be) permits this, for subduing the Sensual Appetites, which you have followed in Time past.

For if you would have as much in the Service of God, as you had in the Service of the World, you have done Nothing in forsaking it; and you shall not be happier in one place than in Another, if withall you do not change your Manners. And if you found as Savoury Meat in *Northstrand*, as you had in your Aunts House, wherewith would you Mortifie your Sensuality? And if you do not Labour more in the Service of God, than you did in the Service of the World, wherewithall will you accomplish your Penitence, enjoyned in *Adam*? For in the World you did not Labour but for the Meat that Perisheth, and now since God gives you that, you Labour only to seek the Kingdom of Heaven.

For, believe me, I have no need of your Labour, nor of that of others, God hath given me more than enough for my Entertainment, and I seek not in this World neither Profit, nor Honour, nor Service, I find all these Things in God; Wherefore all Men are Hinderances to me instead of helps; and I would hide my self from them all, if God did not detain me with them, for their Eternal Good.

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Which Thing should make you see, that I do not keep the Land of *Northstrand*, and that I do not Print my Writings, but out of a Christian Charity ; to the End, that by these Means I may lead my Neighbour into the way of Salvation. Which breeds me nothing but vexation, troubles and disquiet, with Displeasure to see, that Persons are not Satisfied, even with the Abundance which God hath given them ; which is a sign that they are not truly converted, and do not seek the Kingdom of Heaven, whilst they yet desire the things which are upon the Earth, or the Sawces or Conveniencies of Worldly Persons, a Thing which a Regenerate Person ought to despise ; tho' he could easily have them, he ought no ways taste them, seeing all the Perfection of the Soul consists in the Mortifications of the Sensual Desires of Corrupt Nature.

Wherefore in well ordered Cloisters, they strive to Mortifie the Corruption of Nature in every Thing, in Drinking, Eating, Speaking, Hearing, Seeing, by doing the quite contrary to that which Sensuality Desireth. A *Capuchin* of my acquaintance told me, that he was present in the Cloister of the Noviciat of *Doway*, when the Son of a Prince was received among them, and that the first Day wherein he received the habit entring into the Cloister, the whole Convent had for their Broth great flat Beans boiled in water, without any other Sawce than a little Salt : and that when the Princes Portion was set before him, the fume of these Beans striking him in the Nose, made the Blood gush out in Abundance, which the Prior seeing he said to the Novice, my Brother eat these Beans, they are good ; and tho' the Novice endeavoured to eat them, he could not swallow them down, without being moved divers times to Vomit ; whilst in the mean time they gave him no other thing, but these Beans for his Meal : And seeing that he eated nothing, the Prior said in the End, *I perceive our Brother hath no Stomach for these Beans to day ; he must get of them to morrow, he will eat them better* : And so for Three Days in end, the Novice got no other thing to eat, but the first Beans, which had been served up to him the first Day of his entry into the Cloister, and by this mean he overcame the sense of Taste, eated the Beans, being moved thereto by hunger, and afterwards all kind of Meats, how harsh or course soever.

Which

Let. XIII. and Pleasures of Nature. 117

Which, my Child, may make you to understand, that the Mortification of the taste is a Vertue; seeing it is exercised even at this Day, in well ordered *Cloisters*; and all those who were desirous to be the Friends of God, have exercised themselves therein in all Ages.

I do not approve that so great Severity should be used, in this point, toward beginners; but I would greatly commend, that a Novice should study to Mortifie himself, by taking contentedly all that is set before him, without distinguishing between the Sweet and the Sower; Blessing God, when he gives him any thing that is Good, in regard of his Weakness; and contenting himself with things that do not please his Taste, because he knows himself unworthy, by Reason of his Sins, to have better, or to deserve dry Bread.

This should be the Exercise and Practice of him, that desires to become a True Christian; for if a Person will needs continue persevering, in the seeking of his Appetite, he shall never attain to the Estate of Christian Perfection, which consists in denying our selves, that is, all that which Corrupt Nature desires.

You think, my Child, that if the Body were better treated and ordered, the Soul would be the Calmer; this may readily deceive you, seeing ordinarily the Spirit lives according as the Flesh dies: And you have told me, that ye knew this by your own Experience, and that the Flesh doth not so much trouble you in *Northstrand*, as it did when you were in the World, and when its Appetite was better served: Which proveth sufficiently, that the Labour and Victuals of *Northstrand* are more wholesome, than the Labour and Victuals which you had in *Hamburg*.

And therefore you ought more to esteem them that deliver you from Sin, than those that entice you to it, seeing Eternal things are of greater worth, than the things of time; which pass away so lightly, and often oblige a Person to Eternal Punishments. For it was said to the false Rich Man in the Gospel, *Because thou hast had Good Things in this World, and Lazarus likewise Evil Things, for this Cause he is Comforted, and thou art Tormented.* And it was said of the Whore, *give her as many Torments, as she hath had Pleasures in this World.*

Which should make you resolve, My Child, to Love Abstinence and Labour, more than Ease and Good Fare, embracing the Cross to follow Jesus Christ, rather than Ease and Repose, to follow your Corrupt Nature which leads unto Hell: Which thing I wish you, for the Affection that I carry to your Soul,

The 23<sup>d</sup> of August.  
1676.

Antonia Bourignon.

## L E T T E R XIV.

That we must Mortifie Corrupt Nature.

*To a Person, who could not understand that Vertue consists in the Mortification of Corrupt Nature, who is cast out of the Company of True Christians, until she be otherwise Disposed: Because there is no other Way of Salvation, except that of Denying our Selves, to Mortify our Corrupt Nature, Embracing the Poverty of Jesus Christ.*

*My Good Friend,*

**I** AM not displeased that you have left your Husband to go and dwell with your Brothers, since you were not resolved to become a True Christian, as your Husband is resolved to do: For to Live together in a Contradiction of Wills, would be continual Trouble and Disquiet. Wherefore it's much better to Live separated one from another, and to strive to serve God every one as they understand: since God never forceth any Body, leaving every one free to tend to that Perfection which pleaseth him.

And

And if your Husband hath received Light from God; to know that he is not a true Christian, and he hath given him strength to seek after the Means to become one; you ought not to hinder him; but rather pray to God, that he would give unto you the same Light and Force as unto him, to the end that together ye may assist one another in perfecting your Souls.

But since you are of another Judgment, and that you believe to obtain Eternal Life, in following the motions of your Corrupt Nature, you must of necessity go, and Live with Persons that follow the same Natural Inclinations. For with me you could not have followed them without Reproofs, because I know very well, there needs no more but follow our Corrupt Nature to go into Hell, and that loving the Salvation of those, who bear me Company, I admonish them always to Renounce their Corruption, that leads to Damnation.

But Carnal Persons take those so wholesome Corrections, for Severities and Chastisements, as you also call them by your Letter, saying, *That a Father who Chastiseth his Child too Severely with the Rod, smothers the Affection: Whereas he may preserve it by a Moderate Correction.*

And if you were the Pedagogue of the Holy Spirit; you might give him orders, and appoint him how he ought to govern Men: and you should also have come to teach me how I ought to govern, in case you had come to stay with me. But because you have not Wisdom or Vertue, I have no need to receive Instruction from you, loving rather to be instructed of God as he instructs me by his Grace, than to conform my self to the Inclination and Fancie of Men, who look only to that which is Temporal, and the Things that are sensible to their Corrupt Natures:

As for me, I cannot follow this Corruption, I must fight against it, as well in my self as in others that are under me; and it would be a kind of cruelty, to suffer a Child to play with a very sharp Knife, when we see the Danger he is in of cutting himself, or pulling out his Eyes by means thereof. Even so would I be cruel to the Souls that I love, in suffering them to live at rest, whilst they rejoyce that they are able to follow the desires of Corrupt Nature, which are very sharp Knives, that cut off Souls from God, and make them die Eternal Death, going down as pleasantly to Hell, as a

Child rejoyceth to play with a Bright and Sharp Knife.

Can there be found a Father so Foolish in Nature, who would not take away such a Knife from his Child, for fear of making him weep in taking it from him? So likewise, I will not commit the folly of suffering Persons to live with me, who will not denie themselves as Jesus Christ hath taught. I love rather that such Persons should depart far from me, than to come near me, because they would give me trouble, and make themselves the Devil's Martyrs, by depriving themselves of their ease and Natural Satisfaction, by Constraint or Hypocrisie. For if they do not denie themselves for to please God, they would lose all merit, and also would not be Satisfied in themselves.

For this cause all those Persons, whom you Name in your Letter, have done very well in departing from me, for whilst they were yet seeking their ease and self Satisfactions, they did not seek the Kingdom of Heaven, which is found only in the denyal of our Own Will, and no where-else: But all those who have not as yet taken up a Resolution, to deny themselves for to become True Christians, may live at ease, and take the most Beautifull and the Best of all things, as much as they are able, for their Paradise; since they are not to expect another but in this World, which they choose instead of an Eternal and Happy Life.

Wherefore I should pity those, that would come to live with me for any other End, than to overcome their Corrupt Natures, that they may be born again in the Spirit of Jesus Christ; seeing they would be miserable both for Time and for Eternity.

So that you have done well, my Friend, in going to *Frizeland*, rather than to come and stay with me, as I had offered to you to come with your Husband and your two Children, seeing that tho' I promised Maintenance to you all, yet you would not have been content, and all would have seemed to you too sharp or too Sweet; the little House which I would have given you would perhaps have been too Narrow and Inconvenient, the Meat, it may be, would not have been prepared according to your relish; the beds not  
soft

soft enough for you to ly upon ; in short it may be, all would have been displeasing to you, because Corrupt Nature is insatiable, and seekeeth or desireth always that which it hath not, never being willing to content it self with that which is Necessary, as even your Nature doth abundantly witness.

For in sundry of your Letters you say, *That you are in want, and that you, with your Husband and Children, have eaten all that you had ; so that you have not any more wherewith to entertain your selves.* In the mean time, that I, for relieving your Complaints, made an Offer to entertain you, with your Husband and whole Family, in Living well, and doing for the Community, what you can, according to your Capacity.

Which you have despised, instead of thanking me, telling, *That it would be impossible for you to dwell with Two Little Children, among such Persons as we are ; bringing for an Example, That such and such well-disposed Persons, were not able to bear the insupportable Burthens, which we would not touch with our Finger.* Insinuating thereby, That we are Cruel, or Unreasonable Persons, who enjoyn to others that which we will not do our selves.

Which is nothing but Calumnies devised to the Prejudice of the Truth ; since none amongst us, not the Poor more than the Rich, Laboureth for Gaining of Money : For we use neither Trade nor Traffick, for to have insupportable Burthens to bear : And it we do any Work, they are Things Necessary for the Entertainment of this Present Life, and not for Gaining of Money, which we have no need to purchase, since God hath provided some of us therewith, both for themselves, and for the Necessities of those that want, whilst the Rich among us Labour as well as the Poor, according to their Capacities and Employments, and enjoyn nothing to the Poor, but that which they would do themselves, if they were capable.

So that your Allegations are False, proceeding from your Damnable Ingratitude : For instead of Loving us, and Thanking us for so advantageous an Offer, to entertain you, with your Family, out of Pure Christian Charity, you go about to accuse us, as Cruel and Unreasonable Persons, that require Things Impossible of others, whilst we our selves rest at Ease, following our Pleasures.



Surely these Lies and Ingratitudes cannot remain unpunished ; For *the Tongue that Lieth, Killeth its own Soul*, saith the Scripture: and the Contempt that is done to those, that assist us Spiritually or Bodily, is done against the Commandment of *Honouring Father and Mother, that we may Live Long upon the Earth*: seeing all Masters, Tutors or Elders are comprehended under Father and Mother, whom we must Honour, and also all kind of Benefactors. For if it were not so, there would be few Persons that keep the Commandment of Honouring Father and Mother, because many never knew their Natural Fathers and Mothers, or have Lost them in their Tender Years: Wherefore our Fathers and Mothers are all those who do good to our Bodies, or our Souls, by Help, or by Counsel, by Admonitions, or other means, that are Useful and Profitable to us.

For this Cause I judge it your Duty to Honour all those of our Company, since all of us together endeavour, as much as we can, to teach Men True Vertue, and all that which is necessary to the Salvation of their Souls, offering even our Temporal Goods for their Bodily Assistance ; as you declare by your Letter, *That I have written to you to come to Sleaford unto me* ; adding by way of Contempt, *That this would be to put you to the Touchstone*.

Consider a little this brave Acknowledgment, as if you were some Piece of Gold which I would touch, to know if it be of good Alloy, before I receive it. Perswade your self nevertheless, That it is none of my Interest to prove you, or any others, of whom I stand in no need, seeking after nothing in this World, but to accomplish the Will of God. For, as I have said, I need no Body to Labour for my profit, or to serve me, since God has given me the Grace to be able to serve my self, and to serve others more than I am served by them : And every one of us esteems himself happy in serving himself.

And tho this were not, there could be no expectation of reaping much Labour and Service from such a Woman as you, who declares, *That you can do nothing to gain by*, and who would have Employment enough to serve your Husband and your Two Children, tho the Community should expect no Service from you, for which I should try you, or *put you to the Touch-Stone* : So that I will no ways receive you, no more than those, who (you say) *have forsaken me*, and not being able to endure the Touch, are turned back.

Which

Which is very much against the Truth, since none of these Persons, of whom you speak to me, was received with us except as Travellers, whom we sometimes Lodged out of Charity, to the end, they might prove themselves, to know if they would embrace the Meanness of Jesus Christ, as he Counsels Poverty of Spirit. But I may truly say, that I have not yet so much as found One, that has been Voluntarily Poor for Jesus Christ; on the Contrary, they were all Rich in Spirit, wishing (agreeably to Corrupt Nature) always in all things the most Beautiful, the Best, and the most Honourable. And when they contented themselves with the Lesser (as Jesus Christ did) it was for Humane Respect, or because they had not Abundance in their Power, of which Abundance they cannot deprive themselves, when they can easily find it.

This is not a Gospel Poverty, which ought to be Voluntary, and not Forced. For those that are Poor through Force suffer Penances in Rage, when they are not contented in their Poverty: But the Poor in Spirit are glad of Occasions to be in Want of some thing; that they may see themselves made Liker to Jesus Christ, who during his Life was in Want of all things.

For from his Birth he had not a Chamber to Lodge in, but was forced to Lodge in a Stable beside Beasts, that warmed him with their Breath instead of Fire: And he that would examine the Course of his Life, would find that Jesus Christ did always seek the Least Things for his Life, a Poor Maid for his Mother, a Carpenter for his Father, dull Fishermen for his Apostles, while in the mean time he was Lord and Master of All Things, and to him was due the most Noble Palace, the most delicious Meats, in short, all kind of Abundance of Beautiful and Good Things, for his Use, although he was pleased to content himself with the Least, to give us an Example.

Whilst his Creature, that has deserved Hell by its Sins, Desires to have the Best and the most Honourable, yea, the Best Place that it can, and thinks it self happy to enjoy them, instead of Voluntarily Depriving it self of them, when it can conveniently have them, as all Good Christians ought to do, in Imitation of Jesus Christ their Captain, who has Paved the Way for them.

But alas! When we speak of this Meanness of Jesus Christ, to those that call themselves Christians, they are

offended at it; for the Poverty and Meanness of Jesus Christ, is at present Foolishness to the Rich, and an Offence to the Poor, as, the Apostle says, it was to the *Jews* and *Gentiles* in Christs time.

For the Rich Judge it Folly to serve themselves, when they have means to make themselves be served by others, as they reckon it a Scandal to live as a *Mechanick*, when they have the Conveniency of living in Abundance and Superfluity. Even so the Poor are offended to see the Rich Labour, when they have wherewith to Pay Workmen. And thus All Men at present are blind, taking Evil for Good and Good for Evil, without perceiving the Truth of Things.

Hence it is that those Persons, who come where I am, cannot stay there, so long as they resolve to live according to the Motions of Corrupt Nature; whereof I am an Enemy, and will not yield to it in Any Thing, when it is in my Power: And tho' such Persons should bring me great Profit, or render me great Services, I would thank them, and send them back to the Place from whence they came. How should I not send back those that are Poor and have more need to be served than to serve others, when they will not deny Themselves, for to be born again in the Spirit of Jesus Christ?

I will never keep such an one, be he Rich or Poor, since God has made me most clearly to see, that none shall be saved who dies in the Love of Himself, in following the Motions of his Corrupt Nature. It is Folly then for any to come near me, before they have this Resolution of following and imitating Jesus Christ, by Denying their Corrupt Nature: *Behold all the Proof, which I have to make and no other.* For I will Chastise or Correct no Body with the Rod, as you may say, nor take them into my Company, *to put them to the Touch*, since every one should prove himself and know, if he will War against his old Corruption, or follow it, that he may take Measures suitable to his Resolution.

For he who will follow his Corruption, needs only to return to the World, there he will find enough like himself, since Jesus Christ himself saith, that the Broad Way which leads to Destruction is Peopled with a great Number who Walk in it; But he that chooseth the Narrow Way, should choose Persons who have Experience to hinder those, who are unacquainted with this Way,  
from

from Perishing by so many dangers, which are to be met with in the Stormy Sea of this World.

If you see Danger in coming to be with me, you ought to see a far Greater in staying in the Midst of the World : *But if you Love the World, it will Love you,* And you shall Perish with it. Wherein your Husband was wise to leave you, for to go to *Northstrand*, to try if he should be well there. This was with your Consent, and without my Knowledge, wherefore you have Cause to blame no Body, but your own Inconstancie and Change, that you leave him ; after having promised to follow him if he should be well.

You propose to hold that which you have : Wherein you shall do well, if you have the Fear of God ; which I cannot perceive : Since you would make your Husband return to the World against his Conscience, to the end he may gain Money for you, the better to follow your Corrupt Nature. Know you not that it is Written, *That Flesh and Blood shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ?* Your Husband would be unhappy to return to you, so long as you seek no other thing. It's his part to say with Truth, that it is better to hold that which he has, than to destroy Himself for to please you.

You tell him, *That he ought to take care of his House, both in Spirituals and Temporals*, as he is obliged, which he hath already done abundantly. For he came to me for his assistance in Relation to both, which thing I have granted him, not only for his own Person, but also for his Wife and Children, whom he had provided both with Temporals and Spirituals.

But you would not accept thereof, so that he is now free to do what seemeth good to him, without asking your leave, in regard he has given you full measure, and had procured for you all that, which a Man of Honour could do for his Family according to the Scripture.

You tell him unjustly, *That he leaves his Wife and Children in Necessity, and his Affairs in Confusion*, Which is false, since he has Written to you to come to *Sleswick* to him, and that you shall want for nothing, shall even have a little House for your self, without having any more care for what you shall Drink or Eat, or wherewithal you shall be Cloathed.

He has much more Reason to complain of you, than you of him : Since you with-hold his Cloaths and Linnens, because he desires to become the Disciple of Jesus Christ, you will not give him a Shirt for his Body, wherein he shews well that he loves you, but you shew that you hate him, by deserting him to go into *Frizeland*, and refusing him his own Cloaths and Linnens ; because he will needs serve God, out of the World.

For if he would have Sailed to the *Indies* to gain Money, by putting both his Soul and Body in Danger, doubtless you would have provided him well with Linnens, Cloaths and other Necessary Things : But for the Service of God, you will give him nothing but Contempt and Reproaches.

For you tell him, it seems he will care only for himself, *That he may live at his Ease out of the World* : And with a Design to Discredit our Company you said before, *That we give Burdens to be Born, which we will not touch with the point of our Finger*. Consider a little how this doth agree, and how he will live at ease among Persons, who would give him Insupportable burdens.

It is well seen, that you write out of Passion every thing that comes in your Way, without Reason and without Truth. For if we give Insupportable Burdens to those who come to abide with us, then your Husband cannot Live there at Ease as you reproach him. And if it be true, that he minds to Live at Ease out of the World, he offered you this Ease which he takes to himself, when he desired you to come with him unto this Rest and Ease, out of the Entanglements of the World, where it should have fared no worse with you than with him, by enjoying with your Children the same Ease, and the same Repose, which, you say, he has a Mind to take for himself alone, so as you should not have needed to care for to Morrow.

Which thing would have been a great Advantage for you, since you say, *That you and your Children are in Want, and have spent together all that you had*. Have we not Ground to believe, that you Love better to serve the World in Misery and in Poverty, than to serve God in having All Necessaries, and without any other Care than to Govern your House well, which is the only thing, you say, you can do, and likewise an easie Employment for Women who say they are fit for nothing but  
House-

House-keeping, and in our Community every one doth that which he is fit for. For those who are Labourers, Labour the Ground? Writers, Write; others take care of Household Affairs, or dress Meat, according as Occasion and Necessity requires: because a Community is like a Body, whereof All the Members assist one another in their Need.

But it seems you have found in your self that ye have not so much Charity, as to be willing to render some Small Service to others than your Husband, since you would draw him out of his Happiness, to have him alone with you, to the end that with Pain and Labour he may gain, wherewith to Entertain You and your Children; whereas this Entertainment has been offered to you, without so much Care and Labour, and with Assurance of Life Eternal.

For who can doubt, that all those who shall forsake the VWorld to follow Jesus Christ shall be Saved? Since by so doing, they put themselves without the Reach of Perils and Dangers, which are found in Conversing with Worldly Persons, who are like unto Pitch which a Man cannot touch, without having his hands defil'd with its Blackness and Clamminess. Beside this, those who enter into our Community follow the Counsel of Jesus Christ, *for they do not Labour for the Meat that perishes*, since God has given it us before we Labour; far less Labour they to heap up Riches, *which the Worms eat, and the Rust Spoils, and Thieves steal*; but they Labour to show Charity one to another, by furnishing them Necessary Things: and he that Labours the Earth, nourishes him that Writs or Prints things wholesome for nourishing the Soul of him who helps to nourish the Body.

Is not this a good Employment, whereof we may say with David, *Behold how Good and Sweet is it for Brethren to dwell together*? Whereas it's very ill to dwell with the Men of our Time, who do Nothing but trade and Toil, for heaping up of Money, through Covetousness, or at least *Labour for the Meat that perishes, and are Anxious for to Morrow, with Care of what they shall drink, or Eat, and wherewithall they shall be Cloathed*.

But it seems to me that notwithstanding all these Christian Truths, you persist in a desire to Labour more

more in the Service of the World, than in the Service of those who desire to become True Christians, because Corrupt Nature hath greater Satisfaction among such as are like it Self, and will more follow it's Own Will among Vicious Persons, than among those who are Vertuous, or aim at Christian Perfection; since these do declare War against their Corrupt Nature, and reprove those whom they see following this Corruption.

This should be done by a Christian Charity, to assist and admonish one another in Vertue: which Persons that do not resolve to become Vertuous cannot endure, and Reproof offends them, as I believe it would assuredly have offended you, if you had come to stay with me.

For I could not have suffered, that you should have had more care for the Ease and Conveniency of your Family, than for the Accomodation of the Community, since this would have been nothing but Self-Love. And likewise I could not, without reproving it, have endured you to Murmure at the Entertainment and Lodging, which you should have found with us, as I have had Experience of Sundry of your Countrey Men, that did so when they were with us, who tho' they had more than they could have in the Service of the World, yet Murmured as the Children of Israel.

Which was insupportable to me, and obliged me to leave them to follow their Own Wills, as far off from me: which was the greatest Punishment I could inflict upon them, tho' their Nature seemed to be eased, to see it self delivered from the Rule which God hath given his Children: because this Corruption is better satisfied in doing Evil than in doing Good: Wherefore it cries like a Swine under the knife, when 'tis contradicted, or forced to do that which it would not.

But the Person who Truly Desires to become a Christian, reckons himself Happy when he finds any Body, that stirreth up to Mortifie this Corruption, and suffers it not to bear Rule in his presence.

For my part, if I had found a Person who would have reprov'd me for these things, by declaring to me the Will of God when I knew it not, I would have sought him out even to the End of the World, and would have followed and valued him as a great Treasure, and obeyed him All the Days of my Life, tho' he



he had given me only Bread to Eat and Water to Drink, and would have been far from desiring, to have in his Company a fine Chamber, fine Linnens and Cloaths or Meat to my taste, knowing that the Persons who seek these things do not seek the Kingdom of Heaven.

And he who doth not seek this Kingdom, shall never find it, since it is written, *who so seeketh findeth, and he that knocketh, to him it shall be opened*, and to no others; for all those who seek their Ease and Satisfaction in this World, they have their Paradise in this World, and ought to expect no other. If it were otherwise Jesus Christ would have declared it, instead of telling us, *That we must denie our Selves, take up our Cross and follow him.*

It is now Free to every one to choose his Paradise in this World, by the Ease and Satisfaction of Corrupt Nature, or to choose an Eternal Happy Life, in the Mortification of his Corrupt Nature: For it is certain, that one cannot have both together, and he who believes it doth greatly deceive himself, and shall be confounded at Death before God.

Wherefore, My Good Friend, you have need to consider what you ought to do, warning likewise all those Persons, of whom you speak in your Letter, who have turned back, and loved more to follow their Own Will than the Will of God which I have declared unto them, that they do as the Prodigal Child in desiring to return to their Father, saying Truly, that his Servants are better treated, than those who are obliged to eat with the Swine of the Beastly Men of this World, who regard nothing but the Flesh and Time, without foreseeing the Eternal Delights, that are prepared for those who shall in this Short Life overcome their Corrupt Nature, to subject it unto the Will of God, as I wish to them all, remaining equally.

*Their very Affectionate,*

From *Hamburgh*, the  
12th of *May*. 1676.

*in Jesus Christ,*

Antonia Bourignon.

L E T-

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## L E T T E R   X V .

He that denies not Himself cannot be a  
True Christian.

*To Two Married Persons, who desired to forsake the World to become Christians. But not being able to overcome Corrupt Nature turned back, pretending that the Imperfections of others had weakned them : Tho' in effect the only Cause was, that they could not embrace the Poverty of Jesus Christ, the Mortification of their Corrupt Nature, and the Renouncing of their Own Wills : Which they are admonished to resolve upon, if they will Travel towards Eternity.*

*My Friends,*

I have received a Letter written by you both the 9 of June this Year, by which ye acquaint me with the Resolution which ye have taken together, to forsake the World and retire to *Northstrand*, where ye desire to buy some Possession, to live there together with your Family ; which seemeth to me very Good, provided ye were constant to persevere therein.

But I have seen you so Changeable, that I cannot advise you any more. I must leave you to do as ye shall think fit, because ye are not intirely resigned unto the Conduct of God ; ye will, and ye will not ; For how soon ye find any Difficulties in the Service of God, ye look back with *Lot's Wife* ; and instead of Embracing the Croſs to follow Jesus Christ Suffering, ye seek to be delivered from it as soon as may be, and ye give Ear to Men who flatter Corrupt Nature. And so long as ye shall continue in this disposi-

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disposition, ye will always change ; because inconstancy is a quality of the Devil : And when a Person finds himself changeable, he may be sure it's the Devil that Governs him.

For the good Spirit is firm and constant, and unchangeable in his good resolutions, he is patient to wait Gods disposal, suffers and endures all things willingly for his Service. For it would be a delusion, to desire to enter into the Service of God, that we may suffer nothing ; since we find our selves obliged, to suffer so much in the Service of the World, wherein Crosses are Inevitable, and much greater and heavier to bear, than they can be in the Service of God, where a man ought to rejoice in Sufferings, because these sufferings terminate in a good end, and serve as means to perfect our Souls, and the Crosses of the World afflict both the Body and the Soul, being endured with Regrate and Melancholy.

And I know by Experience, that the Crosses which God has sent me in his Service, did more satisfy and comfort my Soul, than the greatest Pleasures which I could take in the Service of the World. For I have an inward Consolation, when I think that Jesus Christ declares them Blessed that suffer in his Service, saying, *Blessed are they who shall suffer Persecution for Righteousness.* And if I should have suffered Crosses, Persecutions and Contempt, in the Service of the World, as I have suffered in the Service of God, methinks, I could not have endured them. But the Resolution which I have to embrace the Cross, for to follow Jesus Christ, makes all the Difficulties that befall me seem light ; by suffering for the most part with Joy, in Blessing God that he has made me worthy to be able to follow Jesus Christ in suffering.

Wherefore I am astonished to see you ( with so many others ) look back for trifles or some Words or Actions, that did not please you, or for some Defects, or Imperfections of others, which in no wise concern you, since God will ask an Account of you, of your own State only, and not of that of others. So that all these Reasons together should not have been strong enough, to make you look back from a Resolution which you had taken, to become true Christians. For tho', that truly you had not found in the Service of God, all your Eases and Conveniencies, and that you had endured the Imperfections

fections of others, yea, the Reproaches and Contempt of Brethren ; all these things, say I, should not have made you turn back in the Voyage of Eternity which ye had undertaken by the Grace of God : I must say, that your resolution has not been sincere nor absolute, or else that the Devil has seduced you, to make you turn back.

For if the desire of Travelling towards Eternity, had been absolute in you both ; So small things as you met with in this way, would not have been capable to turn you aside from it, and Tentations or Crosses would have confirmed you the more in Vertue, which can never be Solid in you, before it be Exercised by Sufferings and Contradictions. For as a Pilgrim cannot Travel into far Countreys, without being provided with Victuals, no more can a Person Travel towards Eternity, without carrying with him the Food of his Soul, which is the Cross, Sufferings and Spiritual Conversation. All which things you might have found with us. For it's impossible in a Community of different Humours and Natures, that Persons can live without having occasion of Contradictions and Mutual Forbearance : Because your selves not being perfect more than others, it's necessary that they bear with you, and ye with them, since otherwise your Reciprocal Vertues would not be Exercised, nor your Faults amended, if they were not observed and admonished by others. This is the advantage which is found in Communities ; that there they may Exercise and Admonish one another without Sin. For this cause it is, that *David* says, *That it is good and sweet for Brethren to dwell together*, and that the Scripture says also, *Woe to him that is alone, for if he fall, there will be no body to lift him up* : But he that goes out of a Community, that he may live after his own way and be reproved by no body, deprives himself of all these Advantages, and throws himself into the danger of this unhappiness, foretold to him that loves rather to be alone, than to suffer any thing of his Brother.

Ye both did leave your Countrey and Kindred to come to seek for Vertue with us, to the End, that by means thereof ye might become True Christians : But when ye were come hither you sought for a Convenient Houle, not willing to content your self with such a place, as I could afford you tho' I offered to make it commodious at my charge, where you should have payed no rent :  
but

but ye loved rather to Employ the little Money which ye had, for having a House to your Mind : after this, ye Murmured against the victuals which our Brethren gave you, and bought for your selves apart. And ye did likewise take offence at some Things which our Brethren said or did, contrary to your Sentiments, and sought Persons to Murmure with you ; that ye might Second Corrupt Nature, and Lament together that which it wanted in the Service of God. All those things sufficiently declare, that ye were come to *Holstein*, there to seek your Pleasures, as you had sought them in the World, and to take the most Beautifull, and the best, if ye could have had it.

Which a Person should never do when he resolves to become a Christian, because Jesus Christ teaches him, *To denie himself and to take the last Place*, even then when he may easily have the first, as Jesus Christ did, who being Lord and Master of all that was most Beautifull and Best, did chuse the least of all things for his use, taking more Pleasure in Poverty, than in all the Riches that belonged to him.

Whereby ye may well see, My Friends, that indeed ye came not to *Holstein* for to imitate Jesus Christ ; but rather to live there according to the Motions of Corrupt Nature, which seeketh always the most Beautifull, the best and the most convenient ; which not having according to its wish, it hath made you turn back, and will do it yet, if ye do not resolve to make War against it, and to give it the contrary of that which it desires, to the End ye may gain the Kingdom of Heaven by Force : which Kingdom I cannot see that ye have Truly Sought hitherto. Since I know by Experience, that he who seeketh the Kingdom of Heaven, is not Sollicitous any more about that which he shall Eat or Drink, wherewith he shall be Cloathed, or in what place he shall reside ; and it Sufficeth him that he Advances in his Voyage, without turning aside from it, to seek after a better Lodging or a better Table : For he thinks it's enough for him, to find Simply wherewith to Entertain his Life ; without desiring any other thing, or so much as looking after a House where he shall Lodge at Night, travelling untill weariness oblige him to rest : and then he takes it as he finds it.

I travelled so when I came out of my Countrey and my Fathers House, to follow Jesus Christ and to become a Christian: I had taken a Resolution to travel all the Day, and to Rest where the Night should Surprize me; and if I had found a Stable, I would have gone into it to pass the Night; and if I had not then found any House, I would have reposed in the Fields. For I had no other care but to arrive at Eternity. All other things were only Accidental to me, I had neither Scrip nor Money, nor any Humane Help, believing firmly, that God was able to preserve me in Life, even without Eating, if that should fail; as I truly found by Experience.

For the first Day, that I came out of my Fathers House without taking a Penny with me, I Travelled about Ten Leagues, without Drinking or Eating, and I had neither Hunger nor Thirst, being so full that I could not Drink a Drop, or Eat a Morfel that was presented to me, in the House where I behoved to Lodge at Night. And I esteemed my self happy when I could Lodge in a Barn; where I thanked the Persons that gave me a Bundle of Straw to lie upon, and the next Day Bread and a Glass of Water for my Food; and I rejoiced in the Bottom of my Soul for the Happiness I had, to follow the Poverty and Meanness of Jesus Christ at some distance; after I had left the Pleasures and Conveniencies of my Fathers House. I did not Regrate the want of his Fine House, or my well Furnished Chamber; but was afraid lest I should be known, to be forced to return thither.

Take now your Measures, My Friends, to see by your Own Reason, if ye had any Good Disposition to become the Disciples of Jesus Christ, when ye left the World to come and stay with us; and if ye were resigned to the Conduct of God as a Christian ought to be; and if ye would not rather be Governed according to the Corruption of Nature, than according to the Spirit of God; and if ye did not seek your selves, instead of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And by that ye shall clearly see the cause, why ye are gone back, and wherefore ye will yet change, if ye have not a better Resolution.

For tho' ye should yet return to me, I could not promise you, that ye should have all your Conveniencies in the Service of God, or even that ye should find a House

to your Conveniencie, or Meat Seasoned to your taste ; on the contrary I fear ye will have somewhat to Suffer there. For if God Love you he will Treat you, as he did the Disciples of Jesus Christ, who followed their Master in all kind of Labours, since the Apostle declares, *That they walked during their Life in Hunger, Thirst, Weariness, in Persecution, in Fear, in Anxiety ;* He boasts, *that he was Imprisoned and so often Beaten ; that he had been in Perils at Sea, upon Land, even among False Brethren ;* And finally it's known, that almost all the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus Christ were put to Death, for having followed the Truth of the Gospel,

And now those who seek to be Disciples of the same Jesus Christ, will not suffer contempt or any Hardship, and seek their Conveniencies as much in following him, as they did in the Service of the World : Which I cannot comprehend ; since Jesus Christ Yesterday and to Day is always the same and will never change. His Gospel Law is the last of all the Laws God will give unto Men, we are not any more to expect another ; and the Persons who at this Day desire to become True Christians, ought to have the same Dispositions that those of the Primitive Church had, otherwise they deceive themselves ; as much as others who perswade themselves, that they can become True Christians in abiding in their Self-love, and in seeking their Pleasures and Conveniencies.

For ye must imitate Jesus Christ that ye may be his Disciples ; and ye must denie your self to follow him. And if ye have not a Resolution to do this, ye ought not to return to me, since my Bodily presence cannot save you, no more than all those were saved who followed Jesus Christ to hear his Word, seeing many of them were damned. For the Scripture tells us, that Jesus Christ said unto them, who said to him that he had walked in their Streets, *I know you not* : To teach us, that he will Reject those who have followed him and heard his Word, when they shall not have put the same in Practice. For he saith to them, *I know you not*, tho' that truly he had conversed with them.

So likewise cannot I take you for my Children, if ye do not absolutely resolve to become true Christians. For it would be but a toil for you, to undertake once again this long Voyage with your Children, and it would be a displeasure and a disquiet to me to see you Discontented



in the Service of God, whereas all ought to be Voluntary and Pleasant there, willingly suffering ill Accommodation, Hunger, Thirst and Weariness, for to satisfy the Justice of God by Penitence, and Contempt and Persecutions, if God permit that they befall us.

For it is very displeasing to a Traveller, to be in the Company of Persons Travelling with him, who would complain or murmur at all things, saying at some times that the Sun is too hot, and then that the Air is too Cold, that the Rain wets them, or the Dust blinds their Eyes, that the way is too rough, too hard, or too dirty, Complaining that they are weary and desiring to rest when it is time to Travel, being Discontent that they cannot find Beds to lye in, or Meat and Drink according to their mind.

All these things would be troublesome to a Pilgrim, who is Accustomed, Joyfully and with Patience, to suffer the Inconveniencies of Travelling, and he would have Reason to say to such a Company, that which is commonly said, to wit, *That he who would have his Ease should stay at home and not Travel*, Because ill Accommodation is unseparable from Travelling, to which hardships do belong.

And now I say the same to all those, who desire to follow me in the Voyage to Eternity, which I have undertaken to Prosecute, even to the end : In which sensual Persons are Stones of stumbling to me, by making the way tedious, with their Complaints and Discontents. For this cause, I love much better to Travel alone towards Eternity ; than to be Accompanied by Persons, who seek their sensual Ease and Accommodations.

I mean not that we must die of Hunger or Labour, to make this Journey of Eternity ; because God doth always provide for our Necessity in it. And I have Travelled so many Years in these ways, without ever wanting any thing necessary for Life. But I was always content with that which God gave me.

And when he gives me any Victuals, I eat them, and do not consider, if they be exactly to my Taste or not: For Sharp and Sweet, Cold and Hot, are all alike to me. If I find abundance, I take no more thereof but what is necessary : And if I meet with scarcity, I endure it Joyfully with Patience. I take as much of Travel as I can bear, and Rest when I may conveniently. When I am  
very

very Thirsty and have nothing to Drink, I put a Pin into my mouth and chew it to bring Spittle, thus helping my self with all kind of means to keep me in Life, and when I cannot relieve my self I endure all with Patience, tho' it were Death it self if God should send it, thinking that I had then ended my Journey, and were going to enter into that Eternity, so much desired.

Behold the deportment of that Pilgrimes, who Travels towards Eternity. If any one will bear her Company after this manner, he shall be very acceptable to her, for if Nature be social the Spirit is yet more so, willingly binding and uniting it self with its like, and their Journey seems Light and Pleasant unto them, in Discourfing together of the Felicities, which they shall find at the end of their Journey, in speaking of the shortest and easiest ways to come at it.

This Comforts and Recreates the Soul, and makes that a Person feels neither Hunger nor Thirst, nor Weariness or Bodily Inconveniency, through Fervour of Spirit. It's in this respect that Jesus Christ saith, *Man Lives not by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth from God.* Which a Person may find by Experience, that seriously entertains himself with Discourses of Life Eternal, or with the Words of God. He shall find even his Body satisfied, which will have less need of Bodily Nourishment than it was wont to have, when he amused himself with talking of Meat and Drink and other vain things.

For God Nourisheth both the Body and the Soul, and Blesseth the Bodily Food which is taken only for Necessity: So that a Person needs not take so great a quantity thereof for preserving Health. But he that seeketh his Pleasure in his Drinking and Eating, shall not find this Blessing in his victuals.

Not for all this, that God requires of Christians at present, so great an Austerity as that of the ancient Fathers Hermites; who lay upon the Ground having Nothing but Herbs to Eat: Since he gives us Food and Conveniencies, such as little Children might well subsist by: But he requires of them a Resignation of their Wills unto his; for to suffer themselves to be intirely Governed by his Divine Wisdom, in not seeking any thing any more, but to know his Holy Will, to fulfil it constantly even unto Death, remaining evermore content with every

thing, which God shall permit to befall them, and blessing him always, as much for having little as for having much.

And if ye both have this Resolution, and this Resignation to Gods Conduct, ye may well come to stay with me, for to learn the way that leads to Eternity. Since I am acquainted with it long ago, and know the best ways, and also the Perils and Dangers that are to be met with therein. I know likewise the Discourse which ye must have, for to go lightly in the foulest and roughest ways. Finally, I have walked through all the Dangers that are to be found therein, whereof I shall always Advvertise you, if ye will Listen to me without looking after other Travelers, who think to arrive at this Eternity by different ways, tho' many wander therein and lose themselves in their strayings.

They often think they are in the true way, when they are still going backwards, as you did, with all those who having put their hand to the Plough looked back : For these Poor blind ones thinking to Sail without a Pilot, have run the hazard of making Shipwrack, yea, some have Perished in the midst of the Stormy Sea of this World, for having presumed to be wise in themselves, tho' they were very Ignorant in all the Ways and Dangers, that are in this Voyage of Eternity.

We must let every one do what they please, since God hath Created all Men Free ; but if he has yet once more called you, do not turn a Deaf Ear to his Voice, fearing least he forsake you, after having given you so full measure. For God Knocks once, twice, or thrice at the Door of our Hearts, but if we do not open to him, he retires from it and leaves the Person to himself, who throws himself Headlong into all kind of Evils, perswading himself Nevertheless that he is doing well, through the Blindness of his Spirit.

I am told that they who have departed from me say, that they found God every where, as well in being by themselves, as in the Company of Christians : Whereat I would rejoyce if this were true, but I know that the Devil deceives them as he hath deceived you ; and that they will never find true Vertue in staying by themselves.

For it must be Exercised or it is worth nothing : It is but Presumption of Spirit to rely upon ones own Judgment ; because it is Corrupted by sin, and cannot incline but to do Evil in its self, and to think Evil of others ; since it is without Charity, and the Apostle says, *That Charity thinketh not Evil.*

And if ye had Charity, ye would not have thought ill of the Words or Actions of our Brethren, when ye were with them : And if ye had seriously laid to Heart the Perfection of your own Souls, ye would not have spent your time in observing the Imperfections of others ; because ye would have had work enough in amending your own. For it is a great defect, to desire to find more Vertue in another, than we have acquired in our selves.

Ye ought by a Christian Charity to have had Compassion upon the defects of those, who strive to attain to Christian Perfection, since your selves have so great difficulty to attain thereunto, tho' ye have the desire thereof. Ought ye not then to believe, that another hath also the same difficulty that ye have, because being all Born in sin, we cannot do well but by force ? And he that wrestles with his defects should not be despised, because he has not overcome them all : But he ought to be much esteemed, who seeks the means to overcome them.

And thus ought Christians to assist and second one another in their Combats ; without reproaching them, that in so long a time they have not yet carried the Victory ; because you know not your selves, in how much time you shall overcome one single Imperfection. For it doth not belong to us to limit a time to any Body ; because this depends upon the Grace of God, who knows better what is fitter for every one, than our short sight can penetrate.

He left to St. *Paul* a Thorn in the Flesh, which vexed him against his Will, for to keep him in Humility and to hinder him from being puffed up with Glory, by the Graces and Wonderful Visions which he gave him. How would your little Spirits have been Scandalised, if they had discovered such a temptation in any of our Brethren, who are Notwithstanding far from the Perfection of that Apostle, and therefore might have greater Defects to fight against, without being for this worthy of contempt or occasioning Scandal to any Body.

Since Man cannot hinder Tentation, it suffices that he fight against it and do not consent to it: forasmuch as there is no Evil in feeling a Tentation, but much in consenting to it.

For this cause ye ought to be Judges of your selves only, and to condemn your own Defects, without casting an Eye upon the defects of others, of whom ye have not the charge, since the Scripture doth severely Threaten *those who meddle with other Mens Business*, and Saith, *If your Eye be Single, your whole Body shall be full of Light: and if your Eye be Evil, your whole Body shall be Dark.*

How could ye receive the Light of the Holy Spirit, in coming to us with an Evil Eye, for to Spie out our Defects? Ye ought rather to have come with a Child-like Simplicity to Learn, instead of desiring to teach and to give orders for the Deportment of others, who seek to be Governed by the Holy Spirit, and to follow his Direction; tho' in Effect they do not obey him according to their wish, and do not that which they would gladly do; but often do that which they would not, as the Apostle saith this also of himself, *For the Spirit is ready, but the Flesh is weak.*

Ye thought they did ill to Cheapen so Nicely, and look so Narrowly to Every Thing; tho' in Effect they did this with Reluctancy: For it is against Natural Inclination to apply our selves to small things, because Corrupt Nature is always Proud in it self, and would Appear Liberal, to the End it may be esteemed of Worldly Persons, to whom it willingly yields, and will not have their trouble, or Evil Speaking, in Contradicting them, or Refusing to give them that which they would have.

But God hath commanded me to resist them, and to give them Nothing but that which is Just and Reasonable: because it is better to have their Contempt and Dislike, than to co-operate with their Fraud and Avarice: and I teach those things which I have Learned of God to my Children; who do not as yet follow them so much as I desire, because this is Repugnant to their Nature, which would like better to give unto every one what they ask, and to be Esteemed and Honoured even of the wicked. This is much more Pleasant, and Flatters the Senses which love Ease and Honour.

But because ye do not comprehend that True Vertue consists, in *Fulfilling all Righteousness*, as Jesus Christ commands in the Gospel, you Judge amiss of the best Actions of our Brethren, when they strive to accomplish that which I have taught them from God, who makes me to understand, *That he who shall content himself with the least, and shall follow the meanness of Jesus Christ Closest, that he shall follow Jesus Christ nearest in his Glorie.*

And Jesus Christ hath good Reason to say to men now a-days, *My thoughts are far different from yours*: Seeing Men think on Nothing but that which is Beautiful, Good and Honourable in this World; and Jesus Christ thinks of Nothing, but how to make Men live so as to attain to a Blessed Eternity. Behold the difference, that is between the designs of God and those of Men, who regard Nothing but Time, whereas Jesus Christ Regards Eternity.

Wherefore if ye desire to be his Disciples, ye must not amuse your selves any more, in thinking, *what ye shall Drink and Eat, nor wherewith ye shall be clothed*, as Jesus Christ adviseth, but to apply all your Spirits, to know the will of God, and to suffer your selves to be Ruled and Governed by him alone, to the End he may do with you, whatsoever seemeth him good; without following your Own Wills any more in any Thing, because they are always Evil, tho' they often seem very Good. For the wise Man Warns us, *That there is Nothing more deceitful than the Heart of Man.*

Ye have a good occasion at your hand to know the will of God, since I discover it dayly. It concerns you to resolve if ye will follow it or not.

I believe ye will say with the Mouth, that ye will follow it absolutely: but I know not if the Effects will follow your Words, after having seen you change so lightly, and go for counsel to the Wicked after you had known the Truth of God, whereunto ye should have continued faithful constantly, without looking after any Body, as thinking that ye are alone in the World for to work out your Salvation.

For if others save or destroy themselves, this will not be required of you; it's sufficient for your part that ye seek the Perfection of your own Soul, without considering how many others are Perfect or Imperfect, because every one ought to care for himself, praying only for others:

others : and in doing of this ye will find enough to amend in your own Conscience, without enquiring into the Consciences of others; Principally those who have given up themselves to the Government of the Holy Spirit; because such a Master can well Govern his Disciples without your interposing, and he will make them well to know their defects, for to amend them.

Strive only to become the Disciples of such a Master your selves, and to Learn with *Tauler* the Alphabet of Vertue.

Which ye cannot well do, if first ye do not know, that all ye have done hitherto is Evil. For ye have followed Corrupt Nature, over which the Devil hath much Power, and he hath made you do many things which ye took for Good; which indeed were very Bad. And all Natural Men are so, thinking often that they do the Will of God, when they are doing the Will of the Devil. For this cause Jesus Christ said to *Nicodemus*, *Verily, verily I say unto you, that if you be not Converted and Become as a little Child, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

And I say to you in like manner, that if you take not the Simplicity of a Child for to Learn true Vertue, all the Vertue which you have had until now is vain and cannot save you, albeit, according to Appearance and the Judgment of Men, ye have lived well and better than many others; as I believe *Nicodemus* had also done in his time; since he came to Jesus Christ to ask what he should do, it is a sign he had a desire to save himself and to live well.

And I believe that ye have also the same Wills which *Nicodemus* had, and for this ye desire to buy some Lands in *Northstrand*, to go thither to live out of the danger of the World : Which is the true way to shelter your selves, from many Dangers and Occasions of Sinning : But believe it, ye shall not be more saved dying in *Northstrand* than elsewhere; if ye do not resolve to make War against your Corrupt Natures; and if ye do not become Children for to Learn true Vertue. It's this Conversion which God requires of Men at present, as Jesus Christ foretold to *Nicodemus* in his time, *That we must become little Children, to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, That is to say, that it's necessary to be Born again in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, for to be saved; because all Men in general



ral were Damned in *Adam*, and after him are all become Children of Wrath and Perdition without any exception ; So that no Body can ever be saved, if he be not raised up, or Born again in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Forasmuch as the Spirit of Corrupt Nature is Damned, we must be Born again in the Womb of our Mother, which is the first Estate wherein God Created us, for to be saved. This is true Regeneration. For God could not know his Image and Likeness in us, if this Corruption which sin hath brought upon it be not taken away : For this cause the Scripture saith, *That none shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Unless he be Cloathed with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, since God saith, *That no body shall come to him but by Jesus Christ*.

Which sheweth clearly enough, that no Body shall be saved in following their Corrupt Nature : While in the mean time so many Persons in this Age say, that they are Regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, tho' they follow the Motions of their Corrupt Nature ; which is a great Delusion.

For to be Regenerate in this Spirit, we must not have Wills of our own any more, but be in all things resigned unto the Will of God, as Jesus Christ hath taught us saying, *I am not come to do my own Will, but the Will of him that sent me*. And to be a Regenerate Person, they must not any more seek after Riches, Honours and Pleasures in this World ; which the Apostle commands saying, *If you be Regenerate, seek not any more the things that are on the Earth, but those that are Eternal*. A Person that is Regenerate, despiseth the Riches and Honours of the World, and Chooseth the last place, as Jesus Christ hath taught us to do.

And all these marks are not found in the Persons, who say at present that they are Regenerate ; since we see them do and practise the quite contrary, by seeking their Ease, their Honour and Pleasure, as much as they can : So that this is nothing but a false Regeneration, sprung from their Corrupt Imagination, which presumes that it hath that which it hath not.

And it's necessary that such Persons be *Converted and Become as little Children*, If they will be saved ; because that by thus following Corrupt Nature, they shall infallibly Perish with it. For we must be raised up that we may

may live, and we are all Dead in *Adam*, and ought all to revive in Jesus Christ. Now for this New Birth, this old *Adam* must of necessity die in us, before that Jesus Christ, the New *Adam*, can revive there.

And if ye knew, my Friends, the miserable Estate, into which sin hath reduced Man, ye would never follow your own Will in any thing, and ye would suspect it in its best motions, and ye would seek every where to Learn the Will of God, that ye might follow it in stead of your own, so long as God himself did not make known his Will to you immediately.

I think ye believe that the Holy Spirit governs my Soul, and that I know the Will of God, and that for this cause ye have left your Country, to come and understand it by me : But at the first shock that your own Will received, ye returned back, which sufficiently testifieth (as you say) that ye was not sincere at the bottom, and that there was some Falshood and Disimulation therein. For he that would seek God purely, would be content to Eat Stones with a Person that knows the Will of God immediately, and to suffer Cold, Heat, Weariness and all kind of Necessities, if God so permitted, rather than to depart from the Light of the Holy Spirit.

But a Person, that doth not as yet know his frailty and the miseries into which sin hath reduced him, imagines that he shall be well in all places, providing he maintain a Good Will. Which deceives him, *Since that Hell is Paved with Good Wills*, which Men have not made effectual ; because there are so many Dangers in the way to Eternity, that they are easily turned aside from it by the Discourses of Men. They are Robbed and Spoiled by those, who flatter for their own Advantage ; they fall almost at every step, by so frequent occasions of sinning ; they turn aside from it to take the straying Paths, which the Learned now a-days teach. Finally, all that is to be met with in the World, are nothing but Stones of Stumbling in the way of Eternity. Wherefore a Person hath much need of a good Guide that knows the way to it, or of a good Pilot, to Guide the Ship in safety to a good Harbour, that he may arrive thereafter at a good Port, instead of imagining with himself that he shall easily find the right way alone, seeing this is too dangerous, because of the Blindness and Corruption of Man.

As for me, I find my self so Corrupt, that I durst never follow my own inclination, tho' I thought it very good ; I must always take time to recommend the desires which I have ; And if I do not discover the Will of God therein, I do not put them in Execution, for fear of doing Evil, or being surpris'd by the Devil, under an appearance of Good and Vertue : For I know his wiles, and I see how often he deceives Men, when they think they do best, and catcheth them without their being aware ; whereof the Scripture warns us when it says, *That the Devil Transforms himself into an Angel of Light.*

But the Spirit of Man is so unsettled, that it doth almost all its Actions without Reflexion, and seeth not its Faults, and the deceit of the Devil, till after the Evil is come to pass, and then it is too late ; which is to be lamented ; since, that after Death there is no Remission, but during this Mortal Life there is a time of mercy, for him that will be Converted and Become a little Child.

For he that thinks to be saved in Living and Dying according to Corrupt Nature, is seduced by the Devil, who puts this hope into his mind, for to draw him with himself into Hell, because he knows it is Written, *That Flesh and Blood shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* He suffers Persons of good will to live softly, according to the motions of their Corrupt Natures, and with this he knows they shall not escape from him in the End. Yea, the Devil governs such Persons in all their ways, and assists them even to prosper in their Enterprizes ; from which the Devil always draws some Advantage ; he gives them also Industry and Skill to order well their Affairs, for their own Advantage ; that Prosperity may fill them with vain Glory and Avarice.

And for to see, that it's the Devil who doth this, there needs no more, but to observe the Weakness and the little Spirit which these Persons have, that desire to be Regenerated in the Spirit of Jesus Christ ; for it seems they become Fools, without skill to govern themselves, because the Devil doth then take from them all the skill, he had given them for to serve the World well : And these Persons do then become Ignorant, and unable to go rightly about even Temporal things, and find themselves incapable of all things. This is the cause, why they

they ought, as a little Child, to Learn to do all things according to the Will of God, since they know not how to do them, but according to the Will of the Devil.

This is a thing wherein Nature finds much reluctance, and cannot submit to do things contrary to her inclinations, and after a quite different manner than she was accustomed to do, being displeased to see her self governed as a little Child, after she is become in Age a perfect Man, and Learned according to her own Opinion.

Ye will find all these things by Experience, My Friends, in case ye have a sincere resolution to become true Christians. Ye must Learn your Alphabet again, as *Tauler* did of a *Lay-man*, who taught him all things, as well relating to Temporals as to Spirituall; and tho' this *Tauler* was a great Doctor and Learned, full of fine Speculations of Divine things, he did not forbear to submit himself to a simple *Lay-man*, who governed him in all things: Which I fear ye could not do, tho' ye should stay in *Northstrand*: For so long as ye are yet in Self-love, it would seem strange to you, to obey the Will of God in small things. For this end, ye desire to buy a House for your self in *Northstrand*, that ye may order your Household Affairs as you shall think fit, which Corrupt Nature desires. For she has no greater Enemy than submission to the Will of another, and will be content even with small things, provided she may have them according to her Own Will. But a Person that is regenerate in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, doth not use his Own Will any more [ as ] knowing that it is always Evil.

I will not say, that it is ill done, to buy a House in *Northstrand* for your own particular use, since it is the Will of God, that all Married Persons with Children have every one their Houses a-part. But I would only make you understand, how far from the right way the Persons are who say, that God may be found in *Frizeland*, as well as in *Holstein*; which would be true, if there were in *Frizeland*, a Person that knows the Will of God, as there is in *Holstein*, or if these Persons did follow the same Rules in *Frizeland*, which God gives in *Holstein*.

Since all Lands are Blessed of the Lord, it remains only, that we accomplish his Holy Will in all things where-

wherefoever we are, by taking the best means for to do this. But we see by Experience that all these Persons who have retired from us, to serve God elsewhere after their own way, are waxed Cold, and have gone backward from the way of Vertue; yea, some have engaged themselves again in the business of the World, more deeply than they were before, and exactly follow their Corrupt Natures, without having or hearkening to any thing that resists them, and so are fallen out of the Frying-Pan into the Fire; and their last Actions are worse than their first: Because a Person grows still worse so long as he follows Corrupt Nature; as a Person grows still better, so long as he follows the Motions of the Holy Spirit.

Which is a mark to discover, by what Spirit a Person suffers himself to be guided and moved, seeing they cannot continue in the same State; and when they do not go forward in Vertue, they go assuredly backwards.

Which thing your selves cannot well discover, because the Heart of Man is Deceitful above all other things. Wherefore a Person is happy in having found one, that can lead him in the way of Vertue: But they must not suffer themselves to be led by all sorts of Persons indifferently; since there are at present so many Blind Guides, who fall into the Ditch, and make them also to fall therein whom they lead.

For this cause there are many Persons, that would do less ill, in following their own Motions in the business of their Salvation, than to subject themselves to the Conduct of another, who is no more enlightened by God than themselves. For he that Prays to God with Humility of Heart, for to know the right way of salvation, there is no doubt but he shall be instructed by God himself, or by those that are instructed by God.

Which thing I believe has happened to you, since ye both have known these Truths, by the means of my Writings, according to your own Confession. Ye ought never to have forsaken these means, which God had so liberally given you, until your selves had received immediately from God his Divine Conduct: Then could ye follow it in all places to which ye go, or where ye abide.

But this Happiness hath not as yet befallen you, and therefore you will do well to make use of the means, which

which he has given you for your Conduct. And if ye shall go unto *Northstrand*, and I be there or thereabouts, I will freely give you wholesom Counsels : And allow you to Converse with our Brethren, so far as this Conversation shall do good to the Perfection of your Souls, and no further. Since we cannot seek after any Body, nor entertain our selves with Idle Words or Actions, because God hath forbidden these things, we must strive to observe them, to repent and rise again when we fall from them.

Behold the Instructions which God gives at present to his Children: If ye will also be of the Number, ye must obey him without thinking that you are wise enough in your selves, since you have the means to seek, if you have the desire to find.

Ye have now abundantly discovered the Wickedness and Deceit of the World, for to leave it ; study likewise to know that which *David* saith, *That it's Pleasant and Sweet, for Brethren to dwell together.* For this is not all that we flee from Evil, we must at the same time do Good, by removing all Impediments and Searching out all possible means, for putting this Good in Execution.

This is all, that I could advise you in reference to your Letter. For to buy, or not to buy Land in *Northstrand*, this depends upon your Will and not upon mine. I durst never Counsel any body according to my own proper Motion, which is corrupt, as are those of the rest of Men; and all the Counsels which I give, ought to come from the Holy Spirit, that they may not be held for suspected. Now he has never revealed to me as yet, whether ye, or any other should dwell in *Northstrand*. But he has certainly revealed to me, that all those who shall read my Writings, and put in practice the Instructions which he hath Dictated to me, shall be all his Children and have Life Eternal; which I wish to you both, continuing ready to assist you therein, according to my Power,

July 15th  
1676.

Anthoinette Bourignon.

L E T:

# LETTER XVI.

That sensuality must be Mortified.

*To a Person, who desiring to become a Christian, would not deny her Own Will, nor Mortify her Bodily Appetites and Sensualities, thinking to find the Perfection of her Soul, by going to Church, and to the Holy Supper, or by the Reading of the Holy Scripture, or other Spiritual Books. Which is shewed her to be no great thing without Poverty of Spirit, or Mortification of Sensuality.*

*My Good Friend,*

I Have received yours of the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, with the Declaration which you make concerning my sentiments; but have not had time to Answer you till now, neither have I seen a pressing necessity of doing it, knowing that you will follow your Own Will rather than my Counsels, and that you are free to do this, as all other Men likewise are, whom God has Created all free, without being willing to subject some of them to others. And therefore you might well use your liberty, to go out of *Holstein* (as you have done) without my Knowledge: And you needed not make any excuse to me for it by your Letter, since I have long ago given you the liberty to do what seems good to you: Having seen whilst you stayed with us, that you did not seek the Perfection which God teacheth me. I was well pleased to have you at some distance from me, sending you out of my Lodging to dwell by your self, to the end you might follow your Own Will out of my Power, when I could not bring you to follow the Will of God, after the manner that he taught it me. L I I



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I would not force you to any thing, because God himself never forceth any body, and Jesus Christ saith expressly, *If you will be Perfect, sell that which you have, &c.* He doth not say, *You must do this, or it is my Will.* He saith only, *If any one would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross and follow me*: Leaving always liberty to every one, to be perfect and to follow him. Now you was not willing to deny your self, or to take up your Cross for to follow Jesus Christ, but loved rather to abide in your old habits, and to avoid the Cross and Sufferings, by seeking the most Beautiful and the Best with all your might, as all those ordinarily do who live according to Corrupt Nature. So that if you do not Drink the best Wine, or Eat the best Meat, it is, because you have not Conveniency to do it. For if you were Rich, you would spare nothing for to give your body its Ease and its Pleasures; and even you do not see that this is evil, since you have told me oftner than once, that you thought, Rich Persons would do ill, not to take the most Beautiful and the Best for their use, when they have Conveniency to do it.

And this is a Lesson which Preachers themselves observe and teach to the People: But God teaches me far otherwise, and tells me, *That the Self-will of Man is wholly Wicked and Perverted by sin, and that none can follow it without sinning.* And the Persons who do not comprehend these Truths have nothing to do to stay with me, because they would trouble me by [moving my] Compassion, and I would trouble them with my Reproofs. Wherefore it's better that we live separated, and that every one do that which he Judges to be best.

And if you believe at present, that it's better to go to the Supper in the Church of the Reformed, you shall do well to do it, if this can serve as a mean to unite you more unto God, and to disengage you from your self-love. But I am afraid lest on the contrary, this Communion make you cleave the faster to your sins, in thinking that you have satisfied God, by observing that saying of his, *Do this in remembrance of me*, when you neglect his other Injunctions, As that of *denying our selves*, and *bearing our Cross to follow him*, or to keep this Commandment of *repenting, without which we shall utterly Perish*, According to the saying of Jesus Christ, who did not utter such threats at the Institution of the Supper, not say-

ing,

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ing, that all those who shall not be present there shall Perish, as he did of Repentance. But on the contrary he says speaking of the Supper, that he who receives it unworthily receives his Judgment. It remains for you to know, if you shall receive it worthily, when you shall be there according to your desire. For me, I never yet found among you a Soul disposed for this Nuptial Banquet, but rather I find them as yet Cloathed with many vices, capable of being cast out, as was he of the Gospel, who had entred without having a Wedding Garment. And if Judas, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, received the Devil instead of the Grace of God, by means of that Supper; how much should a sinful Soul be afraid to receive the wrath of God at this Table, in stead of his Grace and Mercy: Since all that which Jesus Christ hath taught us, are things sacred that all Christians ought to observe, as well as to go to the Supper, if they will please God?

But you have not as yet Penetrated those things and have gone to the Table of the Lord by Custom, by humane respect, or some self-interest, believing even to receive some Graces of God by this Communion: Not considering that God hath said by his Prophet, *I will cast the Dung of your Solemnities in your Faces.* But the Christians of this Age do not understand the Scriptures, and yet less conform their lives to the Level thereof, but follow the Motions of their Nature, believing that they live well when they do nothing that is blame-worthy before Men, and because they do not walk in the sight or the presence of God, they think they have satisfied him when they have satisfied Men, which will fail them. For God has no need of their Testimonies or Approbations. He is the only clear sighted Judge, who searches the Reins and Examines the Consciences, Judging Righteously every one according to his Works, not according to the Applause of Men: Since on the contrary Jesus Christ tells us, *That he who will please Men is not his Servant.* This is far from giving Grace to those who do Good Works by humane respects.

I fear I shall profit your Soul nothing by declaring all these things unto you, having seen by experience, that you incline to follow the ordinary course of Christians now a-days, who place all their Perfections in External things, and in speaking well of Vertue, without putting

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it in Practice. And I will not draw you out of the Road when you are willing to continue in it: But I warn you, that I cannot assist you with our Temporal Goods, so long as you live in this Estate and follow the Motions of your Corrupt Nature; because our Goods are Dedicated unto God, to be employed for the Entertainment of those, who desire to become true Christians; and not for others: And we are resolved, rather to throw all our Goods into the bottom of the Sea, than to give them to Persons who seek after the most Beautiful and the best in this World, because they would augment their sins, according as means were given them to follow their Appetites and Sensualities; and the Charity of a Christian ought to extend it self toward his Neighbour in such sort, as that if he cannot induce him to do well and follow Vertue, at least he do not give his Neighbour the means to increase his Sins and his Damnation: Because there are in Hell Divers degrees of miseries, as there are in Paradise sundry degrees of Glory, which is verified by the Scripture that says, *In my Fathers House are many Mansions*: And speaking of the Damned it says, *Give her as many Torments, as she received Pleasures in this World*; To shew that every one shall receive according to his Works, and that he who in this World shall have more renounced his Corrupt Nature, and approached to the Love of God, that Person shall be to all Eternity in a higher degree of Glory, than those shall be who have done this less. Even so shall it happen to sensual Persons: For by how much the more they shall have followed their Sensualities in this World, by so much the more deeply shall they be Damned; and shall have to all Eternity more Pains and Torments, according as they shall have taken their delights and sensual Pleasures here.

For this cause the Soul that is endowed with true Charity, ought rather to take away Temporal Goods from Persons, who are governed by the motions of Corrupt Nature (when this may be done with Justice) than to give them wherewith to increase their sins, by the Advantages or Gifts of Temporal Goods; for as much as these cannot serve them but to encrease their Sins, and the Pains of Hell for all Eternity. And if it be a greater bodily Charity, to hinder our Neighbour from being wounded, than to cure him after he is so; how much greater must our Charity be towards him, when we take away from him the means of hurting his Soul by Sin, and of going down deep-

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deeper into Hell? For it is most certain that by giving to a Pamperer or a Glutton, we are the cause that he will encrease his Pampering and Gluttony; because Nature being insatiable will encrease its Apperites, according as it shall have Means and Conveniency: As a Luxurious Person will also do, who having wherewith to feed well will encrease his Luxury, and an avaricious Person will encrease his avarice according as Advantages shall be offered him; a Slothful Person will doubtless encrease his Sloth, if you give him where-upon to live at ease without working. Insomuch that it is a certain truth, that we Act against Christian Charity when we assist, or give to Persons who follow the motions of their Corrupt Natures: You shall assist them to sin more easily, and to encrease the Number of their sins.

But I believe, my Good Friend, that you have never believed this, since you have often murmured against us, because we did not give you plentifully to follow your sensualities. Which Notwithstanding I did for the care that I had of your Soul: For if I could have assisted you with Peace of Conscience, I might have given you according to all your desire, since God has given us Riches, and I have kindness enough for you: But I could not do this, whilst I saw that you was not resolved to deny your self, but rather to seek the most Pleasant, the most Beautiful and the Best, and to give to your Corrupt Nature that which is most desired: I found my self obliged to withdraw my assistance, fearing to do ill to your Soul thereby; for I have seen by experience, that if you had Conveniencies, you would give to your sensual Appetites all that they desire, and would not work at all if you had whereby to live without Labour, and that you would pass your time in going to walk, and that in the Neighbour-hood, or elsewhere, to spend your time in Idleness, many times in speaking Evil of your Neighbour, as it hath but too frequently happened at *H. T.* House, where the Male-Contents assembled with you to murmur against us, because you were not all treated as Brethren, or did not get assistance to live at ease or according to your sensualities: For I cannot believe that you ever wanted necessities, because you have evermore told me, that you could well gain your entertainment, and that you was sorry you had gone out from among us, only upon the Account of the Perfection of your Soul; and as to the rest, that you were without care, as being capable to gain your living. And when you was with me at *T.* where I would

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have

have stirred you up to work at your Lace, that by this work you might find a Piece of Money at your return to *H.* you Answered me, that there was no need for that work: As if you had been Rich enough, without needing to Labour with your hands for your Entertainment: While in the mean time I have heard since, that you frequent the Company of *H. T.* and other discontented *Frislanders*, that you might have from them some assistance for the present life. Wherein methinks you have done very ill, in wounding your Soul by Detractions and Murmurings against us, for to maintain or flatter the Inclination of Corrupt Nature, both in your self and in others: And you had done much better to hold you at your work, and to gain with ease and in quietness two or three pence at your Cushen, wherewith you might have easily lived at *Sheswick*, where all things are very cheap, infomuch that I would not wish to have more to live my self in this Countrey.

But because you are not content with necessity, but would have your sensualities, you have left this Countrey: And you tell me, it is, because you have no body to advise you. Which methinks is ridiculous, since being a Woman of Age and Spirit you may advise your self in Temporals, having no Business or Affairs worthy of advising with others. And for the things of your Soul, ye have the Holy Scripture and my Writings, which give you abundance of wholesome Counsels, without seeking other Persons to advise you. And tho' none of us had given you Counsel as you may say, you might have lived there sweetly in repose, without being troubled by any body in working out your salvation, without having the disquiet, which I am told you have at present among your Children, and the reproaches which you must bear, as if you were chargeable to them without bringing them any advantage; whereat I am astonished, because I have seen Divers Letters of your Daughters, wherein she intreated you so much to come and stay with her, promising to entertain you, and saying, that you should want nothing in her Company. I must say, that their Charity is of a short continuance, since they reproach you so much at present, because they entertain you, whilst you serve them and their Children. I know not how ye will continue in subjection to these Persons of the World, and hear so many of their reproaches. But for me, I would love rather to have nothing but Bread to Eat and Beer to Drink, and live in Peace, than to have all these reproaches and disquiets with good fare. It may

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may be well said that your Viſtuals coſt you Dear, ſince you ſuffer ſo much for them: For if you were content with your needs, you might eaſily find them in living by your ſelf, doing your beſt and managing well what ſhould be given you. I know a Perſon that has ſome Money to diſtribute to the Poor, whereof I would cauſe you get ſomewhat weekly for your Nouriſhment; but it muſt not be employed upon delicacies, but on things precisely neceſſary; or otherwiſe I could not meddle to procure you any thing, fearing in any manner of way to Co-operate unto ſin.

I am greatly aſtoniſhed, that you ſay you came to *H.* by my advice: Becauſe this is not true. I wrote indeed to your Son, that it was not adviſeable you ſhould ſtay with him for ſundry Reaſons: And among others that you might have hindered him from being able to ſtay in the place where he was, having there his Expences and Entertainment, which is gain enough in this preſent time, wherein ſo many Perſons Labour and Trade to have theſe things, without being able to come at them.

And you would have been happy if God had given you the Grace to ſtay with us, in having the things that are neceſſary unto life; but ſince you would not truly ſeek the Kingdom of Heaven, the reſt could not be given you: You muſt needs endure the tribulations of the Fleſh, if you will enjoy its Pleaſures: As the Apoſtle ſays, *That he who enjoys the Pleaſure: of the Fleſh, ſhall have the Tribulation of the Fleſh.* Now the Pleaſures of the Fleſh do not conſiſt in Luxury, or Carnal Pleaſures only; but in all other Pleaſures wherein the Fleſh can delight it ſelf, as in Drinking, Eating, Recreating our ſelves, in Sumptuousneſs of Cloaths and Furniture, in the Softneſs and Conveniencies of the Body, finally in all that wherein the Fleſh delights: Since all theſe things bring Tribulation to the Fleſh: For he that will Eat and Drink greedily and will pleaſe his Palate, muſt Labour and Trade much for gaining of Money, to the end, he may be able to ſatiſfy the Pleaſure of the Taſte. How many Cares, Diſquiets, Labour, Diſcontents and Diſpleaſures hath a Perſon that ſeeks to gain much? He is vexed at his Loſſes, he is troubled with Law Suites that are commenced againſt him, he is diſturbed with Jealouſie when another gains more than he; he frets that he cannot gain or deceive according to his wiſh; he is ſad when his Money is diminiſhed and that he cannot have abundance any more; finally, the Life of a dainty mouthed Perſon brings continual Tribulation to his Fleſh, which he might avoid, if he would

content himself with such Meat and Drink as is necessary for the entertainment of his life, or such Furniture and Cloaths, or Conveniencies of the Body. He might then have all this pleasantly by a moderate Travel or Care, whereas all excess of these things breed him a Thousand tribulations; as Luxurious Pleasures also do, which beget so many Diseases and Inconveniencies to the Body of Man, and so many Cares and Disquiets to his Spirit. Whereas a Person that lives in continence hath nothing to care for but himself, and is not Sollicitous, how he shall bring up his Children, or provide them when they shall be grown up; neither has he the trouble of their Diseases, of their ill Conduct, of their Misfortunes or Crosses, which ordinarily give great Affliction to the Fathers and Mothers that have begotten them. Which Nevertheless none can avoid, who will enjoy any Pleasure of the Flesh be what it will: Because all the Pleasures of the Flesh bring with them tribulation of the Flesh, by a firm Rule and Necessity; for as much as there is no Pleasure which doth not draw its Displeasure after it.

For this cause you have no right at present to complain of the tribulations wherein you are, since you have resolved to seek the Pleasures of your senses, which are always Accompanied with tribulation. I believe you have, being with your Children, some more Delicate Morsels, than you would have had living by your self: But you should also have had more repose and quiet, and more time to look after the salvation of your Soul, as I am certainly perswaded; but I advise you to nothing tho' you ask counsel of me. You may do all that which seemeth best to you; for me, I have neither profit nor loss in giving you good Counsel, I only discharge my self by setting before you the Truths which God makes known to me, leaving you free to follow or reject them; In the meantime I remain,

The 2d of November  
1676.

*Your very Affectionate*

*in Jesus Christ,*

**Anthoinette Bourignon.**

**LET-**



## L E T T E R   X V I I .

That Liberality is not always a Vertue.

*To a Person, who doubted that Justice exercised in a Small Matter might be Avarice ; and that Liberality consists in Abundance, and the neglect of little things : In which he is undeceived, and made to see that this liberality is often a sin, and that it is a great wrong to speak Evil of Good Order, of Justice and Frugality, seeing all these things are particularly taught by God.*

Advertisement concerning this 17th Letter:

I Wrote this Letter, Friendly Reader, to serve for instruction to such of my Children, as have not as yet well understood how I do all my Actions, and think sometimes, that I fail in that which is most perfect, by reason of the Blindness which is at present in the Spirits of all Men, who Judging according to their short sight, judge amiss of the ways of God through Ignorance : As that Hermite did whom the Angel Conducted to a Good Mans House, who received them Charitably, from whom Notwithstanding the Angel stole a Silver Cup : And then led him to a Wicked Mans House to whom the Angel gave the Cup, which he had stolen from the Good Man : And after brought him to the House of a Man that was very Rich and an Alms-giver, where the Angel killed the only Child that this Rich Man had, who sending his Servant to guide the Angel in the right way, he threw the same Servant into a River, which they be-hooved to pass, and drowned him therein. And the Angel informed the Hermite concerning the Works of God, which he could not comprehend, by telling him, that the first Good Man had an affection for this Silver Cup, which he had stolen from him, because it came from his Ancestors, or old Grand-fathers,

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fathers, from which affection God would purge his Soul : For this he caused it to be stolen by the Angel : And that he had given the same Cup to the Wicked Man, because of some good work which he had done among his bad ones, for which God would recompense him in this World, instead of doing it in Eternity. And that this Child whom he had killed to the second good Charitable Man, was, for that he diminished his ordinary Charity towards the Poor, because he had obtained from God an heir to whom he should leave his wealth : And that he had drowned his Servant, was because he had resolved in his heart to murder his Master the Night following, to the end, he might afterward Marry his Wife. These are all Testimonies of the Care, of the Justice, of the great Love which God bears to Men, who in the mean time with their short sight, and the Blindness and Ignorance wherein they live, Judge all these things to be Cruelties and Injustices. Which thing falls out in substance among us daily. For how soon I declare any thing from God which doth not agree with Corrupt Nature, Men will needs examine if that which God says be Good or Evil. And if Nature find any pretence of Reason, they do not put the Will of God in Practice, and rather follow the Inclinations of this Corrupt Nature, thinking that they do better : And by this means they do not advance in Mortification, nor in Submission to the Will of God, tho' all my Children have so good an occasion thereof, more than any in the World, because they may know the Will of God in all things, if they had a true desire to follow it. I have sometimes wished to die if I were not any more necessary to them ; but I see well that it is not yet time that I should die, whilst I see that they do not yet well understand the things which they should practice daily : and that I will need to write much yet, before I make myself to be well understood.

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## L E T T E R.

*My Child,*

I See you are tempted at present with the same temptation, as I have seen almost all my other Children, and that you fear lest I be yet tainted with some Avarice, because sundry  
Ignorant

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Ignorant Persons have said so of me. Perswade your self Notwithstanding that this is no ways true: For if God saw in my Soul such a Coveting of Temporal things, he could not give me his Grace, and his Lights in so great abundance as he doth, and my Soul would not be possessed by him: Because God and Sin are two contraries which always drive out one another, and cannot dwell together, no more than in Nature Fire abideth in Water, since in Grace there is a greater Disproportion between Covetousness and the Love of God, than between Fire and Water.

Wherefore no body should expect ever to have the Love of God, so long as his Heart is yet in Covetousness. Wherein many are deceived, thinking to acquire the Love of God with Covetousness. For the Apostle says, *That all kinds of Coveting are Sins*, and adds, *that if the Law of God had not taught him that Covetousness is a sin, he would not have believed it.*

By which it may be easily comprehended, that God cannot dwell in a Soul that carries in it the sin of Covetousness: And if mine were defiled with that Crime, any might well believe, that all I have said concerning my having the grace of God were false, and that Deceit were in my Mouth and in my Writings: For the Scripture saith, *Where your Treasure is, there is your Heart.* Now if my heart were in Covetousness, it could not be in God, nor have particular Communication with him.

Which being supposed as most true, how could I live contented without taking any Humane Pleasure in this World? And how could I know so many hidden Divine Mysteries, which no body hath ever understood? And how could I know the secret Thoughts of Men, since that belongs to God alone? All those things being verified to be true, by so many Witnesses worthy of Credit, it will be easy for you to conclude, that therefore I am not Avaricious or Covetous, as these ill-willers would perswade you to believe.

Nevertheless I cannot hinder them to believe and say of me what they please; since they are as free to believe that you are a Wicked Man, as to believe that I am Avaricious: Because Man hath his Belief, and his Words in his Power, and may employ them to what use he pleaseth, to Good or to Evil, according to the free Will which God hath given him. And therefore I cannot force them not to say that I am Avaricious, or that I am defiled with any other Sin. Forasmuch as Jesus Christ himself did not hinder Men from saying  
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concerning him, *That he was a Samaritan, a Seducer of the People, and did his Works by the Power of the Devil* : Which was yet worse than to be Avaritious, as those Ignorants say of me.

And they would also say of me all the same things which were said of Jesus Christ, if they had not been acquainted and familiarly conversed with me, which thing hinders them from saying the greatest Evils concerning me, fearing to be put to shame for it among Persons that know me, who know very well that I am not Luxurious, nor a Seducer of the People, much less that I do my works by the Power of the Devil. For these things are not said but by my Enemies, who have no knowledge of my deportment ; but those that know it, and are not willing to imitate it, find themselves concerned to blame me for something, that they may not confess that 'tis their own Vices and Sins which have driven them away from me.

For Man hath that in his Nature evermore to excuse his Faults, to attribute them to others, and never to confess that he hath done Evil. Those things are common and natural to all Men descended of *Adam* : And there will never be any others, except these who by Civil or Divine Vertues overcome these excuses, or coverings of their Sins and Imperfections : Otherwise Corrupt Nature is always subtle, and lieth in wait to discover some fault in the Person, by whom it is or fears to be accused, to the end, that by preventing another, it may avoid being blamed it self.

And after this manner the Persons that know me, have said to you that I am Avaritious, and with many Reasons have even perswaded you to believe it. Which was not difficult for them, knowing that you were never acquainted with me, and know not the Reason, wherefore I look so narrowly to every thing, and waste nothing, endeavouring to put all Goods to profit for the benefit of the Community. Which is even praise-worthy for the entertainment of this present life. But these who are blear-eyed cannot endure the Light, because it dazles their Eyes. They are accustomed to live at Ease, without Care, in all Negligence, suffering all things to be lost and spoiled through forgetfulness and want of foresight : And being habituated to this, it would be a trouble to them to do otherwise, or to suffer themselves to be reproved therefore, because they do not see, that they do Evil in this.

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For indeed they think it is Niggardlines to look so narrowly to small matters : Which thing the Covetous also do, because they have their hearts so glewed to Temporal things, that they cannot lose the least of them, without trouble or regrate. And thus all these sensual Persons cannot take it for a Vertue that I look so narrowly, that I will not willingly suffer a Pin to be lost, because they know the Covetous do so also, and that if themselves were Avaricious they would do the same, and would suffer nothing to be lost of that which their Heart Loved. And measuring me by their own ell, they easily Judge that they do all better than I in this point, without penetrating from what Principle this care of preserving all things so well doth proceed, and they Judge according to their Corrupt Reason (which always thinketh on Evil) that I look to all things so narrowly out of pure avarice.

But if they had the Charity whereof *St. Paul* Writes, *They would not think on Evil.* And this Charity being wanting in them, they think Evil of the best Actions, and the greatest Graces which God hath bestowed on me. For being a Person sprung from the Corrupt Mass of *Adam* as others, I was by my Natural Inclination disposed to Negligence and Prodigality, and did not look to small things, because I had what I desired for my self or to satisfy others, to whom I gave willingly for to have their Friendship, or to be esteemed and loved by them. And to all those things my Corrupt Nature Judged it self happy, in being able to give freely to every one, *For there is more Honour in giving than in receiving Gifts.*

And I exceeded in these two Vices more than any body, to wit, in Negligence and Prodigality. For from my Infancy I was so careless that I lost my Books in the School, my Aprons, my Shoes, and all things that were not sowed or strongly tied, for which my Mother was often angry with me and Chastised me, without being able to make me amend. I was likewise so liberal that I gave all the Meat and Fruit which was brought me to the School, unto Poor Children, and lov'd rather to suffer hunger than to refuse any thing to them that asked it of me. Behold the Natural Inclinations which I had during my Infancy. And when I was come to the Age of understanding I continued thus, yea, exceeded in this liberality, which if it had been a Vertue, I would have excelled therein more than any Person I ever knew. For I gave not only that, whereof I had abundance,  
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but also that which I had need of my self. For being as yet young in my Fathers House, I used not to Eat the Delicate Meat which was sometimes served up there, but kepted them together with the Wine, to carry them to Poor Sick Persons, to whom I carried the clean Linen of my Bed to be used by them in my stead. And when I had the management of my own Goods, I dispensed them to those that had need of them. I Lent to some, and Gave to others, until I behoved to abstain from so doing, thro' the Wickedness of those to whom I had Lent, who studied to Steal from me, and to Live in Sloth and Gluttony, with the Money which I gave and Lent them. And thus I was forced to give over Lending to my Neighbour, for fear of Co-operating with their Sins; After I had Lost Considerable Sums, which I had Lent them; tho' all their Wickedness and Unfaithfulness could not make me forsake the Liberality which I had in my Soul. For I resolved to take Poor Young Girles into my Lodging, and to instruct them in the fear of God, teaching them a Trade, whereby they might honestly gain their Living, believing that my liberality could not be better employed, than upon such Persons, since I saw before my Eyes, to what my Alms was applyed, to wit for the good of the Soul and Body of my Neighbours; and I resolved to employ all the Revenue of the wealth which God had lent me that way, believing that this would be acceptable to him, and that I might well exercise the Liberality and Natural Inclination which I had to do good to others.

But God hath since made me see, that there is yet something more perfect than this Liberality, which Ministred only to the Temporal Accommodation of Men, who did not serve God better with my assistance, than they had done without it. On the contrary they took occasion from thence to offend God more, as well by Ingratitude, as by Sloth, Luxury and Gluttony. For so long as I gave them wherewith to live, they would not Labour, because Corrupt Nature is so Slothful, that it would never work, if without this Labour it could have what it desires. And it hath likewise this Natural Inclination, to give to its flesh all kind of sensualities when it can find them with ease. For the Natural Man exceeds in this beyond the Brute Beasts, which indeed follow their sensualities as much as they are able, so far as they have need of them: But Corrupt Man exceeds in all these things, even to the wronging of his health, yea, and loosing his life through excess of Drinking, Eating, or Whoring.

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Infomuch that God having made me know all these things, I determined for pleasing of him to change my resolution, and to overcome and vanquish, by Vertue, my Natural Negligence and Liberality, to the end, I might study for the time to come, to please God more than I had done Men. For I know always more and more, that by my Natural Liberality I had contributed greatly to the sins of others: For which sins I ask Pardon of God, hoping that he will Pardon my Ignorance, and give me strength to overcome the Contempt which I meet with, from the Men who believe that I am Covetous, as well as he hath given me strength to overcome my Natural Prodigality, which was praised and esteemed of all Men as a great Vertue; tho' before God it was abuse, as he hath since made me to know, that none of those that fear him are in necessity, and that no Poverty happens to any body, except what they procure to themselves by Negligence or other Excesses; or else that Poverty be Precisely necessary to the salvation of Persons that fear God, who willing to perfect the Souls of his Friends, permits them to be Poor or afflicted, as he permitted unto *Job*, who was proved by the Devil himself.

But there is a great difference betwixt these two sorts of Afflicted Persons; for those who are so by their own Faults and Sins, murmur always, and they who are Afflicted in fearing God, are Patient and Contented, saying with *Job*, *God hath given, God hath taken away, his Holy Name be Blessed*; But those Persons who suffer because of their Excess and Sins, do murmur and blame all them that do not give them means to sin more: Being Impatient, that they have not the Liberty and Conveniency of continuing in their Evil habits, and following their habitual Negligence and Prodigality without reproach, and for this cause they endeavour to reproach others, with the Vices contrary to those, whereof they find themselves Guilty, to the end, that by this means they may be avenged of the Person that reproves them. Forasmuch as Corrupt Nature will never Condemn it self, but will cast the Fault which it commits upon another, rather than suffer it self to be Condemned.

Hence it is, my Child, that you have heard of Sundry Persons, that I am Covetous. For I thought to have taught diverse Persons that were with me the Truths which God had taught me concerning this Point, who would not receive this Doctrine, loving rather to Perish in their Darkness, than to open their eyes for to discover the Light of the Truth,



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Truth, and so they withdrew themselves from me, when I would not suffer them in their sins. And that they may not confess that I left them because of their Inveterate sins, they have studied also to find something to carp at in my Actions or Deportment, and finding no ill thing in them they behoved to speak Evil of Good it self, and to find fault with the greatest Vertues which God hath given me, as is his enabling me to overcome my Own Natural Inclination and Human Respects, not to be Prodigal or Negligent any more : For I know very well that these Persons take it for Sins or Imperfections that I look so narrowly to every thing, and give not Liberally to all those who ask or desire my Assistance.

But I love much rather to endure their contempt, than to disobey God, who commands me, *to fulfil all Righteousness, to do all things in order, to put every thing to profit for the good of my Neighbour.* And albeit these Persons will not receive these Instructions coming from God himself, yet I will not forbear to fulfil them to the utmost of my Power : And knowing that it is not just to give the goods dedicated to God, to sensual Persons, who would not employ them but to commit sin, I will give them nothing, and I would sooner take from them that which they have, if it could be done Lawfully, that I might hinder them from engaging themselves into a greater Number of sins : For God hath made me clearly see, that a Person can sin nine ways in another, as the Scripture also declareth.

I cannot therefore with the Peace of my Conscience endure in my company a Person that by his Excess or Sloth, brings loss, Disorder, and Confusion into my Household Affairs; I must either reprove them for this, or else dismiss them if they will not amend, otherwise I co-operate with their Sloth and Negligence, by Tolrating them when it is in my Power to send them away. And I have yet more Reason to dismiss them, when they will needs make me understand that they do well in their Way, and that I do ill in sifting them so narrowly, meaning to teach me that it were better to suffer them to follow their unruly passions, than to reprove them, or to be displeased with them.

Are not these fine Masters whom I should entertain as Pedagogues, to the prejudice of the Instruction which God gives unto me ? Do not I better to drive away such like Persons from me than to entertain them, tho' I know they will speak as much Evil of me as they can ? And ought I likewise

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likewise to give them Assistance, when I know, they will not use it but to do Evil and to sin the more? Is it not better for me to have them for my Enemies, than that I my self should become the Enemy of God, by Transgressing his Ordinances which he has given me, for ordering my Life and Actions aright, according to his Holy Will? And when he tells me, *That I must do all things in good order*, should I suffer all to go into confusion, because the passions of some disorderly Persons, who come to live with me, are confused and disorderly in all that they do? And should I suffer any thing to be spoiled and lost, which may serve for the benefit of the Community, because these Persons who are with me are Slothful, and live without caring for, or minding things that are necessary? Truly, I should be very unhappy if I did so. For it were better for me never to have known the Will of God, than not to follow it, for supporting the sins of these blind ones, who think they do well when they marr all, and despise the good it self, to cover or excuse their Faults.

I will never do this, so long as God shall give me his Light of Truth, to discover how things are before him; and not how they are before the short sight of Men, who Judge according to appearance, and not according to the reality of things, who are deceived and likewise deceive others, by the profound blindness of their Spirits. For I know well, that this Name of Covetous which Men have given me, proceeds from Persons who have been in my Company, and have observed that I willingly put all to profit, even to the smallest things. And albeit, I do this to Exercise the Poverty of Spirit which God hath taught me, they thought that I do it out of Avarice, without considering that I would not entertain them in my House without paying any thing, if I had Avarice, seeing I might have Pensioners that would give me Money for to have that which they have for nothing. And if I were Avaritious, I might employ my self in the business and traffick of the World, for to gain Money by my self, or others that are capable thereof: Whereas none of our Community doth ever Labour for gaining of Money, but for to accomplish the Penitence which God hath enjoyned us in *Adam*, and for things necessary to this miserable life, in which, he that would Eat must work, as saith the Apostle, *That he who doth not Labour with his Hands, is not worthy to Eat Bread.*

If I were Avaricious, I would receive none into my Company, but Persons who would bring me Money, rejecting the Poor that have none; whereas those murmurers themselves are poor and received, and entertained equally with the Richest. For I may truly say, that I never yet asked any of my Associates, what Money they had, nor how much thereof they would give unto me: In regard, I love the Poor as much as the Rich, when they are in an equal Degree of Vertue. And I make no distinction for the Purse, which I despise without this Vertue: And tho' a Worldly Person would give the Hundred Fold of his Pension, that he might live among us in his sins, I would reject him as well as the Poorest among us that would live in Sloth, or other sins be what they will, without regarding Money more than Stubble. Which sufficiently testifies, that I am not Covetous of the Riches of this World, which if I loved, I would encrease them to the utmost of my Power; whereas never in my life did I follow any Trade or Business to gain Money, and evermore contented my self with that which God made me to Inherit by my Parents, having even resolved to give all the revenue thereof to the Poor, and to live upon it very soberly my self, that I may give away the more.

Whereby you may see, my Child, what appearance there is that I am Covetous, and if the Persons that promote those things have any reason for it. For tho' they had no Vertue, they ought at least to have some Humane Reason, to ground their Assertion upon. Whereas all the good sense of Men together could not find the least ground to say that I am Covetous. For I think, that hardly would they find one Person in the World, that can instruct so many marks of Liberality and Disengagement from Temporal Riches, as I instruct. See only in the *Testimony of the Truth*, how many Witnesses worthy of Credit have deposed by Oath, that from my Infancy I was liberal to the Poor; How often have I stript my self to cloath them, or taken from my own Mouth for to give them to Eat and Drink, what Riches and Pleasures have I forsaken, which I might have had in my Fathers House, and which I forsook in the Flower of my Years; to live poor and unknown? How many Poor have I Nourished and Cloathed in the Hospital of *Lisfe*, with my own proper Goods and Labours? And finally, you shall find even by these Attestations that no body could do, or wish more Good to their Neighbour, than I have done all the Days of my Life: Tho' these Ignorants, by the Passion of revenge, would perswade every one

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one that I am Covetous, because I do not give Alms to such as make a Trade of Begging, or to all that ask of me, without considering that God himself forbids me to do it, as I believe I have sufficiently declared by my Printed Writings, where I have spoken in sundry places how we may give and pay, for to fulfil all Righteousness, as Jesus Christ hath Com-manded.

For would it be just to give a Person, when we know they will offend God the more by these Gifts? We could not have Charity for their Souls, if we should furnish them with means to encrease their punishment in Hell, if they die out of the favour of God : Since it is certain, that they shall there have as many different Punishments as they have committed sins in this World; and that those Punishments shall be encreased according as their sins shall be numerous.

Wherefore, we should beware of giving any thing to Covetous Persons, because this increaseth their Covetousness, and yet less to Gluttons, Whoremongers and Sluggards, since those gifts will increase all these Kinds of Sins, and damn them more deeply. Wherefore I counsel my Friends, rather to throw their Money into the Sea, than to give it to the Wicked, tho they were their nearest Relations, for whom they ought to have yet more Charity than for others, to the End they may hinder them from going down deeper into Hell, because of the Riches that would come unto them by Gifts or by Succession from their Friends; who would Co-operate to the sins of their Relations, if they should help to enrich them: because the Worldly Man Employs his Wealth in no other thing, but to increase his Vanity, his Pomp, his Glory, to make himself be better Served and Honoured, and to give to his Body more of Sensual Pleasures, to Eat more delicately, or to exceed in Costly Furniture in Meats and Drinks; all which things being sins, they cannot be Fomented by the means of others without their contributing in some manner to the sins of another, in one or other of the Nine Ways, whereof Co-operation to sin is the Chief.

Consider now, my Child, if I have not Reason to restrain my self from giving to the Wicked, and if I have not likewise ground to pay as little as I can for the things that I buy, or to Persons whom I employ in any Work, when they are Covetous and Unfaithful, seeking to make me pay more for things than they are worth or deserve. For the same Charity should be exercised toward all Kinds of Persons, and the Righteousness which Jesus Christ hath so much Recommended, should be

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put in Practice on all kind of Occasions. And you ought not to consider, if the Person be Rich or Poor, whom you pay, or from whom you buy, but you are only to take notice if you pay the Just Price of that which you buy, or if you give the Just Wages of the work which you have caused to be done, according to the Rate of the place where you are. For if you give more or less, you sin in another, and contribute to the Frauds, to the Lies and Cheats, which they put upon you, who would make you pay more than the Just Price of the things that you have need of; whether it be their Labour or Merchandise: For their Wickedness increaseth, according as you give easily to the Wicked that which he desires: and if to Day you give him a penny more than He should have, to morrow he would have two more, and the next day Three, and afterwards Four and Five, and this will increase to Infinity, because Covetousness is Insatiable, which the Scripture declares, by saying, *that the Eye is never satisfied in seeing, nor the Ear with hearing*; to signify that the heart of the Covetous Man is never content, the more you give him the more he will desire to have, through the thirst which his Soul hath, to have. They Swear, Denie, Lie, and Blaspheme, and will reproach you that they may come at their pretensions, and when you yeild to this, by giving them more to Appease them, you are the cause, why they will yet do the same Evils to many others. For the Satisfaction they find in having obtained something by their Swearing and Cursing, makes them strive to Swear yet more, whereof our first Gifts are in a part the cause: For if we did not give to the Wicked but the Just value of the things that we need from him, he behoved to content himself therewith, and would not so readily Importune others, when he Saw that he gained nothing more by his Oaths. And all the ill he can do to you, will be not to serve you any more: which will not prejudice you, if they be services which you can render to your self.

For there be many things which a Person may do more easily himself, than suffer them to be done by others. And ordinarily, it is nothing but vain Glory that obliges us to employ those Wicked Labourers, who will never serve us without Sinning, or deceiving us in one kind or other.

But because Men now a days are blind, they cover this Cooperation to anothers sin, with the Mantle of Charity, by saying, *That we must give Poor People something to gain*, thinking that it will be even acceptable to God, to make our selves be well served; and to give Liberally to the Poor, as also to those

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those who sell us any thing ; because this Name of *Liberal*, is held for a Vertue, whereof we desire to have the Reputation, and also of not being mean in serving our selves. For they assuredly expect Eternal Life for having given their Goods to the Poor, because Jesus Christ promises *the Kingdom of Heaven to him who gives a Glass of Water, to one of his little ones, in his Name.*

But Men do not understand the Scriptures, and every one glosseth them according to the Inclinations of his Corrupt Nature ; and by this means they hold Evil for Good, and Vertue for Vice, without discovering how things are truly before God. For when the Scripture saith, *That we must fulfil all Righteousness*, it saith not, that we must give our Goods to the Wicked that offend God by those Gifts, nor that we must pay to Covetous and Deceitful Merchants all that they ask : For they do not only ask the just Price or Value of things, but will demand the double, yea, thrice the double and more, if they perceive that you have not Knowledge of that which you are to buy, or that you are in great need of their wares : Then will they straiten you and cut you even to the Bone, that they may have of you as much Money as they desire, or they will leave you in the necessity in which you are. For I have seen this by my own Experience ; that Merchants would not give me their Merchandise for more than the worth, when they saw that I had need of it : Tho' this is directly against Charity, which obliges all Men to assist their Neighbour in his need, whether Poor or Rich ; it is an Universal Law to which all Men in General are Subjected. So that if a Person, be what they will, Good or Bad, die for want of our assistance, when we know their need, we are Murderers before God, and as guilty before him, as if we had killed him with a Knife.

Whereby you may comprehend, my Child, that whatsoever is done against Charity is sin. And therefore that you will sin in giving, by what way soever, Goods or Assistance, to those who would offend God with our Gifts or Assistance. For this cause, he that fears God and pretends to the Kingdom of Heaven, should Learn all those things, and never Govern himself according to the Sentiments of Men, or according to his own Inclination, which being Born in blindness cannot discern aright, and takes almost in all things Good for Evil and Evil for Good, and understands nothing of the Scriptures ; For it's necessary, that the same Spirit explain them which Dictated them : For this cause the Scrip-



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ture it self saith, *That Flesh and Blood shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* ; Because Natural things do not comprehend those that are Eternal, and understand them after a far other manner than they are truly before God.

Behold wherefore these Persons living as yet according to Corrupt Nature say unto you, that I am Covetous ; And it may be they have also believed it, because they have no other but Eyes of Flesh, which see nothing that is Spiritual. For it is written, *that carnal Persons do not understand that which is of the Spirit of God*, and Judge all things according to *Flesh and Blood, which shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, According to the same Scripture. And therefore it is no Marvel, that all these Persons who come to stay with me, Judge ill of my best Actions, so long as they suffer themselves to be led by the motions of their Corrupt Natures : For if I am guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, I must do the things that contradict their Inclinations : Forasmuch as this new *Adam*, which is Jesus Christ, is in all things contrary to the Corrupt Spirit of that Old Father, who by his sin hath Corrupted all Men that were in his Reins when he committed it: which Men are born, Live and Die in this Corruption; if during this short Life they do not strip themselves of this Old Man, for to cloath themselves with the new *Adam*, which is Jesus Christ.

These alone shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and none other, because all Men in General are Damned in the Damnation of *Adam*, and none shall be Saved except those who shall of their free wills Abandon this Corruption, which sin hath brought into their Natures ; Because there needs no more but to follow that Corruption, to go unto Hell, and to be damned Eternally.

Consider a little, my Child ; how few Persons shall be Saved even of those that have a good will ; For many of them are come to me with a desire to serve God, as that Person who speaks to you sometimes saith also, that he came to me to live well : But they will serve God after their own Way and not according to the will of God. For they will follow the Inclinations of their Corrupt Nature wherever they are, and will endure nothing that crosseth their Natural Inclinations, desiring by force to follow this, and withal to have the Love of God, which shall never be.

And therefore it would be in vain to keep such Persons with me ; it were all one, as if you should send an Ass dayly to



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to School, who at the Years End would be but a Beast, as he was the first Day that he came there: Just so is it with Persons that come to me to Learn Vertue, and will needs continue living according to the motions of their Corrupt Natures; they are, *Of those silly Women who are ever Learning and never come to the Knowledge of the Truth*, Of whom the Scripture speaks: And with this they complain that I reject them with their Good Wills, which they believe they have, which are no other but Velleities, or *I fain would*, without effects. For as soon as you come to draw the knot, that they must deny themselves, they cry like stabbed Swine, and say they could do this or that, yea, even, that they cannot Judge that to be good which God teacheth me.

Ought I not to drive such Persons away from me, after I have found that they will not change? For the Holy Spirit who guides me, hath no need of a Pedagogue, to be taught what he shall do or leave undone. We should rather Learn of him that which he gives, than to give him Laws to do this, or that, according to the sentiment of Corrupt Nature, It's much better that such Persons be far from me, than to come near me to do Evil one to another. For if I think to induce them not to follow the Inclinations of their Corrupt Nature any more, or deny it that which it desires, they would easily believe that I do this out of Covetousness: Yet more, when I improve every thing for the Good of the Community, or do not pay Liberally to the wicked that which they desire, or do not give to the Poor, or to themselves Abundance to follow their sensualities. All these things seem to them Vices or Imperfections in me, and they believe, that they would do better if they were in my place. This I have suffered too long in the Person whom you know, who desiring to help my Faults, gave to the Waggoner who brought you last from *Husum* to *Sleswick* Twenty Four Shillings, tho' we had agreed with such Waggoners to make this Voyage at Twelve Shillings for each Person among us: But this Woman would not suffer that our Brethren should pay less for her than 24 Shillings, saying, that they behoved to give him so much, for that they had occasioned trouble enough.

Observe a little, what Authority these Natural Persons take over the Spirit of God, whom they ought to follow and esteem as the Divine Wisdom, by lifting up the head only to hearken to that which she teaches, instead of desisting her, and thinking to do better than that which the

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Wisdom of the Holy Spirit teacheth ! Which hath bred me insupportable grief. For if these Persons be wise in themselves, they can do nothing with me, but disturb and hinder me. And if they come to Learn the Will of God, they ought to hearken to it, and follow it with all Submission, without thinking to be wiser, or more Just and Charitable than the Holy Spirit ; for it would be, *To give the Children's Bread unto Dogs, and Roses to Swine*, to instruct so Presumptuous Persons in the Marvels of God, who believe by their Actions to have more Righteousness than the Holy Spirit himself.

I can do no otherwise than drive such Persons far from me, and not to assist them, unless it be in the Case of great necessity, for it is not of them that Jesus Christ saith, *That for a Glass of cold water he will give the Kingdom of Heaven*, but it is of his little ones that he speaks, when he says, *Whatsoever you shall do to the least of mine, I will reckon it as done to my self.*

For this, if I could find any of his little ones, I would willingly give them all that I have, yea, my own Life if they had need of it, or all my Blood to Drink : And I would reckon it my Honour and Happiness, to be able to employ for God's little ones all that I have or can have ; *But I cannot give the Children's bread to Dogs*, since Jesus Christ hath forbidden me, and foretold, *That turning back they would bite me*, as it is come to pass of those Persons who bite me with Detractions, how soon they have lost the hope of receiving any more assistance, to follow their sensualities. I will forget them, praying God to preserve you from their misfortune, and to discover unto you the Truth of things ; whereupon I continue,

Hamburg the 28th of April.  
1676.

Your very Affectionate  
in Jesus Christ,

Anthoinette Bourignon.

L E T.

## L E T T E R XVIII.

The greatness of sin as well as Vertue is  
measured by that of Love.

*To a Friend that desired to know the difference  
that is between Mortal and Venial sins, for the  
Edification of his Soul. To which it is perti-  
nently Answered, and shewed, that by how much  
the more a Person Loveth sin, by so much the  
more is it Mortal, and that the Imperfection of  
this Love only makes it Venial.*

S I R,

**I** Bless God that he has made you know the Light of the Truth by means of my Writings: This is no small Favour, in Comparison of so many Thousands, that abide in the Darkness of Death and Perish in their Errors. Be you faithful unto these Truths because they come from God, never doubt of it, and tho' all Men would tell you the contrary do not believe them: For there is no other way of salvation but that which God hath shewed me, and which I declare by my Writings, no more for *Turks* and *Pagans*, than for Christians, of what Nation or Religion soever they may be. All must die in the Love of God, for to be saved; Because Man was Created for no other end but to Love God, and therefore he cannot come to a Life Eternally happy, if he do not recover this Love and Die in it. This being supposed as most true, how few Persons are presently in the true way of salvation, since we see them Love nothing but themselves and the Perishing Goods of this Life! While they are made to believe and persuade themselves also, that they shall be saved by the Merits of Jesus Christ. Which deceives many, and makes the greatest part of the Christians of this Age go down into Hell, who falsely persuade themselves that they die happily

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pily being out of the Love of God. They shall be greatly deceived at Death when they see themselves rejected of God, for not having aimed at and attained to the end, for which God has Created them.

And because you ask me what difference there is betwixt Mortal and Venial sin, I shall tell you it in a few words, together with the Operations both of the one and the other. For all that which is done against Charity, which is the Love of God, is Mortal Sin, and Damns the Soul which dies in that State: And there is no other Distinction betwixt Mortal and Venial sin but this, to wit, that he who with Heart and Will placeth all his Affections on any other thing than God, so long he liveth in Mortal Sin, and cannot be saved if he die in that State. But when a Person hath some Vain or Transient Earthly Affection, which doth not reside in the bottom of his Soul nor in his Will, this is but a Venial Sin, for which he shall not be Damned if he die in it, because those Light affections proceed from frailty, yea, sometimes against the Persons Will, by Distraction or Straying of Spirit, which is carried away by some object to covet it, without reflecting, that it doth ill in Loving another thing than God, or Adverting, that it ought not to place its Affections but on God alone.

All these things of Straying or Frailty cannot damn a Person who in the Bottom of his Soul desireth to love nothing but God: But these sins do extremely weaken the Soul, and take from it the force to work True Vertue; they likewise make the Soul unacceptable, inasmuch that these Venial Sins hinder the increase of its Grace, and deprive of converse with God, who takes no Pleasure in any thing that is defiled: And even the Soul that Dies Laden with Venial Sins, cannot see the Face of God untill it be purged by the Troubles of this Privation, which are more Sensible to it after Death than all the Torments of this World. Wherefore the man that's wise will Beware not to continue in any Venial sins, and will rather love to deprive himself in this World of all the little Pleasures, which he can take in this Life, than to be Necessitated for them (tho' Light) to be deprived of the increase of Grace in this World, and of the Enjoyment of the presence of God in the other.

As for me, I would love rather to suffer all the diseases together that can come upon a Mortal Body for one whole Day, than to be deprived in my Spirit of the presence of God for an hour. How much more sensible should this want of his presence

sence be to me, after being delivered from this Gross Mass of Flesh, which makes my Sensibilities so Dull and Dark? For this cause I had rather never Delight my self in any thing that is in this Life, than to take one Moments Pleasure therein by offending God Venially, since these small Pleasures of so short Continuance Terminate into so great Evils, tho' the Person Die in the Favour of God, and be not charged with Mortal Sins which hinder Salvation absolutely.

I know not, Sir, if you have read in my Writings that the essence of all kind of Sins consists in this, that man withdraw's his Affections from God, to place them on some other thing beside him: Because in doing this he opposeth the designs which God had in creating him, to wit, to take his Delight with Man: And this Swerving from the designs of God makes Sin, which is Mortal or Venial according as Men's Affections are Strongly or Lightly Fastened to other Objects than him. For example; If your Heart and Affections be carried to the Riches, Honours and Pleasures of this Life, and that you think, Speak, and Labour for to have them, you are so long in Mortal Sin, as with a deliberate will, you have your Affections fastened to such like things: And if you Die in these Affections, you go to Hell, for having resisted the designs of God, and not keep'd his Commandment, *of loving him with all your Heart*, by setting your whole Heart upon the Transitory things of this Life. But if you love all these things Lightly or Transiently, by some acts of Inclination or will, to have them for your use without fastening your heart thereunto, then as often as you Reiterate these acts or wishes, so many Venial Sins do you commit. It's after this manner that the Scripture saith, *that the Just fall seven times a Day*: That is to say into Surprises: As in having some Joy to be Praised or Esteemed, or a desire to have Money for one's Necessities, or to have some ease or sensual Pleasure, without that your Heart or Affections are tied thereunto, or your will willeth it absolutely; then you offend God Venially.

And few Persons living in this World are free from such like sins, tho' they might entirely disengage themselves therefrom, by denying to their Own Wills all that which they desire sensually; as it is to be believed that *John the Baptist* lived in this World, since the Scripture saith, *That he was the most perfect among Men*. And it were much to be wished that all Christians would aim at this Perfection, because all Venial Sins, how light soever, procure great Damage

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image to the Soul and deprive it of many Degrees of Glory.

For it is most certain, that a Person who is saved because he Died in the Grace of God, shall remain to all Eternity as far from God, as he was removed from his Love during this Mortal Life. It's in this that the Scripture saith, *In my Father's House are many Mansions*. Not that the Glorious Body's in the Kingdom of Heaven will have need of Houses, Palaces, or Castles for their abode, because they shall abide in all kinds of Joy and Delight, and Light shall serve unto them for Garments and a Covering; but the meaning is, that there shall be some Souls in Eternity more United to God than others. As in an Earthly Palace there are sundry sorts of Persons, as Persons of Honour, and those of Honourable Service, or base Service; And the Porter, or Scullion of a King hath not so great access to his Royal Person, as his Gentlemen, his Pages, or his Bed-Chambermen. Just so would I make you grossly to understand, that in the Eternally Happy Life, there are some Souls that approach nearer to God than others.

And we must not imagine that God has chosen (as Kings do) one to be his Gentleman of Honour, and another to be his Scullion, because God is no Respector of Persons; but those that shall have the greatest Degree of Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven, shall be the Persons who have United their Wills most unto the Will of God, in this Mortal Life. Those shall be the Divine Courtiers of the Heavenly Kingdom, shall Eat at his Table, recreating themselves with the King of Glory. But the Persons, who in this World shall have Loved themselves and followed their Own Wills in any thing, tho' not wholly addicted thereunto, shall be United to God as much, proportionably to what they were united unto him in this Mortal World, and no more, because, *God fulfills all Righteousness, and gives to every one according to his Works*.

He will not give access near himself, unto Persons that have Voluntarily departed from his Love, or from his Converse, to delight themselves in the fulfilling of their Own Wills, to take their Pleasure and Delight in Earthly things, after they have been Created for those that are Heavenly and Eternal, and have chosen in this Mortal World to neglect the Love of their God, for to Love the Pleasures of the Flesh, those of the Taste, or of the Praise of Men, by so many repeated Acts. It behoveth, that God admit them not unto his presence, except in so far as they have exerted Acts of  
his



his Love in this World, and no more. When they have Voluntarily employed the greatest part of their time, in Loving themselves, accomplishing their Own Wills, altho' that by Intervals, they have returned to God by Prayer or Contrition, doing nothing but to fall and rise again continually; such Persons, in like manner, shall not see God but by Intervals, in case they die in his Grace: But when those falls are Voluntary, and the Affection of Persons remains glewed thereunto, if they die in that State, they go assuredly unto Hell without Remission; because it is a Mortal and a Capital Sin to be Wedded to any Vice, and it is a Venial and Dayly Sin to fall therein through frailty; because God Damns only Voluntary Sins, which are committed with full deliberation of will. One such sin alone is capable to Damn a Person, tho' with it they should do all the Good Works of the World. But the faults which are lightly committed, without fixing the Affections upon them, Damn no body, but deprive them of the Divine presence, which they cannot Enjoy to all Eternity, but according to the Degree wherein they have continued united to his Love in this World.

Behold, Sir, the difference of Mortal sin from Venial. If you Love your own good, strive to avoid both the one and the other, for it is Written, *Be thou faithful in a little, and I will set thee over that which is great, and elsewhere, he that loveth danger Perisheth therein*: For the Soul that is weakened by Venial Sins, doth easily fall into Mortal ones upon occasion. Wherefore I pray God to preserve you from both, to the end, you may attain to the Love of God here, and dying therein we may bless him together to all Eternity. In the mean time I continue,

*Your very Affectionate*

The 23d of March, 1677.

*in Jesus Christ,*

Anthoinette Bourignon.

The End of the Second Part of *Solid Verue.*

An



# An Accessory Letter

## UPON

# LETTER VI.

*This Letter is, that whereof mention is made in the Summary of the VI. It is Written to the same Person by one of his Friends, to whom he had proposed the same difficulties as to M. A. B. and some others. Upon which an Answer is given him, and it is also proven by the Scriptures that Jesus Christ did fight against, and deny his own Corrupt Will, wherewith he had charged himself, to the end, he might deliver us from it. It was believed, that the Publishing thereof would not be unprofitable to some, to make them comprehend the uncommon Truths of the Sixth Letter, according to the advice and desire of the very same Persons to whom it was Addressed and Communicated.*

*Sir, and well beloved Brother and Friend in Jesus Christ.*

I Received your Letters and the enclosed with joy, being glad to learn from your self the Re-establishment of your Health. I pray God it may serve for his Glory and your Salvation. \* \* \*

Touching your doubts, you have here my thoughts. It seems to me Men are ordinarily too Addicted to the Letter and to the Literal Knowledge of the Scripture, and not sufficiently to its Substance and its Scope. The Substance and Scope of the Scripture were always Necessary, but not the Letter, which was dispensed with for a very long Time. If Men could have rid themselves of the love of External Things, and entred into themselves, doubtless God would not have given them the Scripture; but he did it because Men were too much Addicted to that which is Sensible: And he has made use of a Sensible Thing, not that Men might rest in this Sensible Thing: this would have been a Bodily exercise, Profitable for Little; and what would have become of all those that cannot read? It had been Necessary then to Learn this exercise under Pain of Damnation. And should not the Holy Spirit be Communicable but by Sensible Things? This Scripture is given us to turn us away from Things of that

that kind, and from it self in so far as it is literal; and to bring back the Soul Naked into its Interiour, where God diffuseth his Light. And these that have this Divine Light, have no need of the External Part of the Scripture, for they have in themselves all the substance thereof: It may Nevertheless serve them for an Accessory and most certain Witness towards others, and sometimes towards Themselves, when their Spirit is not so well Recollected as ordinary. As for others, who are yet in Darkness out of this Divine Recollection, they do well to take heed to the word of the Prophets and to the whole Scripture, *as to a Candle that shines in a Dark Place, and which guides them untill the Light come and the Morning Star Arise in their hearts* (2. Pet. 1. 19.) After which, *the Unction teacheth them all things, and it is not needful*, Said an Apostle himself, *that any Body teach you*, (1 John 2. 27.) All the Scripture bears Testimony to this Truth; That they who shall Truly Disengage themselves from the Creatures for to seek God in themselves, shall be enlightened by him. Jesus Christ saith, *If any man follow me, he shall have the Light of Life, and shall not walk in Darkness*, (John viii. 12.) Now to follow Christ, is not to be a great and Assiduous Reader, for he was not so himself: But it is to be in a Condition to say, *I do not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*

And it is these Persons whom God employed to give the Divine Scriptures. They had not Learned or Read them themselves, but they found God and the substance of the Truth within them, and proposed the same without Regard to the forms of speaking. Neither Jesus Christ nor his Apostles were upon their guard, to beware of using any forms of Speech that were not in the Prophets that went before them. And those who then saw and heard them, with a sincere desire to save their Souls, did not stick upon these Formalities and Manners of Speech. It was sufficient to them that by these means they felt themselves moved to Diminish their Earthly Covetousness, and to love God, and prepare unto him Pure Souls for receiving his Holy Spirit in his time. In like manner they did not stick at this, that the words seemed *Rude and Hard*, as well as not of ordinary use, and sometimes *Contradictory to it*; and when they Interpreted them so as to draw good from them, they did not think, that this was to give a good Colour to Evil Things, as they object at present. Likewise when they sought to confront, and Reconcile them with the other Scriptures, they did not think, *That this was to wrest and force the Scriptures, to suite with this*  
New

*New Doctrine.* Finally, if any offered himself out of Charity, to perform this office to his Brethren, to the end, that what seemed to them harsh or obscure, might not offend them; they did not turn away from him, saying, *That he should leave that to be done by them who had spoken themselves:* Upon the contrary, they were well pleased therewith, especially if such a Person could tell them by Word of Mouth the true meaning of those that had converse with God; whilst in the mean time there were so many Glossers and Falsifiers of the Truth in the World, by whom all suffered themselves to be guided, no body Contradicting it. Surely, there is nothing to be lost or feared in Acting after this manner. And if things were in this State at present, there could be nothing but good in doing the same. But the question is to know, if things go so now. Suspend your Judgment a little, my Dear Brother, until you be better informed concerning this matter.

*Obscure or Dubious* ways of speaking, or *that do not seem true*, which are to be found in all kind of Divine Writings, ought not to *Scandalise good Souls*; but teach those good Souls to suspend their Judgments, to moderate themselves, to ask of God, or his Instruments, the understanding thereof; which often is the occasion of making new Lights to spring up. We are likewise much more affected when we see an effect, contrary to that which we feared. Finally, we become more Circumspect for the future, when that which we certainly believed to be most false, is evidently declared to be most true. We do not rely any more, so much upon our own Judgment, we are more empty of our selves and fitter to suffer our selves, to be led unto God.

The difficulty which you Mention, touching that which *M. A. B.* saith in the XIV. Letter of *Solid Versue* (Part. I.) concerning the Reading of the Scripture and the Intermision thereof, seem's to me to have its answer in that very place. For she there expressly Commands the Reading of Holy Books so far as a man find's himself carried by them unto God. And she doth not approve that any should leave off the Reading of them, except in case they be so disposed that they have read enough, and both can and will Practise that which they have sufficiently read, or well enough retained, without needing to read it over again for to put them in mind of it. It concerns every one to see if he be in this State or not. Those who yet have need to put themselves in mind by reading, to Learn; who find that reading is  
useful

useful to them, and who have not as yet in themselves the Fountain of Truth, would commit a great sin in forbearing to read. But the Persons that gave this Rule, *that it is Necessary that all exercise themselves always in reading*, were Ignorant of a great Part of the ways of God. You'll see by *M. A. B's* Answer joyned to this, that your Letter was delivered to her. I leave you the liberty to Judge of her, what you shall find good before God. That Person is always ready to give satisfaction to all those who seek after the sanctifying truth, with humility and the fear of God. But we must not rest in the bark of forms of Speech, but in the substance and scope of the thing. I shall tell you in a few words, what I have Learned and Understood of this matter, after having conferred upon it.

God having Created Man, resolved to try him before he would establish him intirely. Now a Trial is not made but between two things, whereof the one is Evil and the other Good. *Adam* had a Nature full of sensualities (which they call the Inferior part of the Soul, and the Senses) which have this property to rest always in themselves without going farther; and this is not Evil Actually in it self (as it appears in Beasts.) But beside, Man had received a Soul capable of loving freely a Spiritual and more Exalted Object, to wit God: And so he might well feel these sensibilities, and find that they rested in themselves (for all that which is sensible represents nothing immediately but it self) but his Divine Soul, his Understanding, and his Free-will (which is called the Superior Part) ought not to rest in these sensibilities (which would have been ill done) but to refer them to God, to his Praise and Glory, and not to his own satisfaction, and to his own Sentiment and Pleasure: But he ought to resist this resting, and (so to speak) to lead these things out of their own Element into the Divine Liberty; this was the good Conduct which God required of him.

But instead of using his best endeavours, and employing the strength that God had given him, to lift up on high the things that were low, his Soul plunged and threw down it self, and by its fall upon these sensibilities made them much more Low, more Gross, Heavy, Earthly, Selfish, and Enticing the Soul to this Selfishness. These last things are the Consequences and Curse of sin, as the consent of the Soul to joyn her self thereunto is sin it self. All Men who were Originally in *Adam*, were when he fell Originally Defiled and Sinners, and in time they come into the World

with the Actual Consequents and Maledictions of Sin, and thereafter sin Actually, by consenting to their Flesh and to their Corrupt and Gross Senses ; wherein they bring forth Fruits suitable to their Corrupt Origine, which Notwithstanding they ought to Mortifie, and to Renounce their Corrupt sensibility, which is altogether Gross and Heavy, to fight against it and to deny it. Whereunto Jesus Christ came to help them.

Now Jesus Christ was not Originally in *Adam* the Sinner. Wherefore he is not Originally Defiled : And in his whole Life he never rested in, nor debased his Soul to the Sensibility, nor to the bent and Adhesion which it hath to and in it self, and to the Solicitation it makes to draw in the Soul ; wherefore he never sinned by any act, no more than by Origine. For he might, if it had pleased him, have continued God Eternally Happy without caring for man : Or continued in a Glorious Majestick wholly Spiritual and Divine Body, or assumed one as the Angels, without any Impression upon the Soul arising from the Body, and Manage that Body as a Simple Instrument : Or taken one like to that of Men, but with another Constitution than theirs. All this was indifferent to him, he might do as it pleased him. But he was pleased to take to himself a Portion of that Mass, Laden with Maledictions and Corruption, one altogether like to the Flesh of sin (*Rom. VIII. v. 4.*) to put himself into the mire (*Psal. LXIX. v. 3.*) that he might feel our weight, our Infirmities and our Temptation (*Heb. IV. v. 15.*) our Death and our Fears (*Heb. V. v. 7.*) this Law, this Load, this Yoke of Sin, this byas, this Violence which strongly essays to swallow up in the mire, and to carry away as a Torrent (*Psal. LXIX, v. 2, 3. 15 and 16*) not to consent thereunto, to obey them and suffer himself to be carried along with them, but to resist and fight against them, as it appears by his whole Life and by his Words ; To condemn sin in the Flesh (*Rom. VIII. v. 3.*) to learn Obedience (to subdue that which tended to Resistance in him) by the things which he has suffered, (by the Mortification of his sensibility.) (*Heb. V. v. 8.*) to have Compassion on our Infirmities (*Heb. IV. v. 15.*) knowing by experience what it is to be tempted, what Violence we suffer, how the Flesh opposeth it self thereunto and seeketh the contrary, how weak it is, and what force is Necessary to resist it, to the End he may be able to help those that are tempted (*Heb. II. 18.*) and to encourage them to bear their Cross as he did his, to Animate them by his Example,

to leave no more excuse to the unhappy Sloth of Men, who are Deliberately Sluggish and excuse themselves by their Infirmities; But to oblige them indispensably to War against themselves within, as he did in himself. And likewise as the Soul of Man inclines to seek it self and to repose in Spiritual Consolations and Sweetnesses, whereof notwithstanding it is good for it to be deprived, for fear lest it rest in their sensuality, and there find its own interest; Jesus Christ did also load himself with an Inclination to this Spiritual Sensibility, against which he Struggled, by a Sovereign Effect of his will, resigning himself in Spiritual Desolations, even to the last Gasps of his Life. And in these Combats this Sensibility was so contradicted, that not finding its reckoning, it sought by Opposition and Importunity to make him believe that he was forsaken of and Separated from God the Fountain of Rest, insomuch that it was Necessary, God should send him an Angel extraordinary to fortifie the Superior Part of his Soul, and to assure it of the Secret and Insensible Union which it had with God. And yet this seeking of Sensibility and cleaving to self, attacked him a fresh more than ever, and cries in him, that he is *forsaken of his Father*. O how little do men know to what an excess of Bateness Jesus Christ descended through the love that he bore them! It might be well written to him upon an altar, or rather upon the table where his supper is Administrated. **TO THE UNKNOWN CHRIST.**

And if they know their Pattern so ill, how can they, or will they, imitate and follow it? You will say that all this is Debating, and that it Derogates from the Glory of Jesus Christ. This is most True in its True Sense. And the Scripture never saith, that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is Glorious to him, but that it is a Descending, yea an Annihilation, it is a laying down of his Glory, and obscuring it, it is a Reproach, a covering of shame upon the Face, a putting on of Sackcloth (*Psal. LXIX, v. 8. and 12.*) But this is not a Diminution of his Holiness, nor of his love towards God and his Neighbour; On the contrary it is a Manifestation thereof, and a Proof that will stand against all Temptations and Assaults, which being neither Natural, nor Necessary to him, nor procured by him, he notwithstanding Voluntarily took upon him, for to lead us to Salvation, and not for his own Glory and Profit, whereof he had no need. But after his victory, this is so much the more Glorious to him, as he hath overcome more Resistance which he felt. The contrary would diminish the Glory of his Triumph,



And cool our ardor to imitate him, and would make our Courage Melt when we are in Tentations, as if we were then at great distance from Christ and he from us. I intreat you once more, my dear Friend, not to stick at harsh words. St. Paul saith [plainly] *that Christ was made a Curse and Sin*, which is the greatest harshness. I Warn you that there is an Ambiguity in the Words *Evil, Corrupt and Corruption*, which may Signifie either sin it self, or the Effect of Sin, its Consequences, its Ravage : In like manner the will Signifies sometimes the Superior faculty of the Soul, sometimes the bent and Inclination of the Sensibility : And in this last sense one may have an Evil and Corrupt Self-will, without sinning nevertheless when he Resists it. Your Charity and Judgment, will make a good use of this, and of that which this Person Enlightened by God hath written to you on this Head, for your Edification and the Glory of God.

I shall, before I make an End, give a Word of Answer to the Question you make. *If it should not be feared, that upon Occasion of what is said concerning the Reading of the Holy Scripture, and Jesus Christ, the Devil might not (without the knowledge and design of that Person) have intention, to turn all to the contempt or dishonour of Jesus Christ, and his word among Men, &c.*

Yea, surely he might, and he cannot be hindered from so doing. For it is the Nature of the Devil to make Men abuse all the best things, he has had an Intention to make all that Jesus Christ and his Apostles said and did, and the whole Scripture, to turn to the Dishonour of God and Christ, and to the contempt of the True Sense of the Scriptures ; And hath even succeeded universally therein. It concerns men to resist his Artifice. Those that will save themselves by the love of God and their Neighbour, following their Saviour in Simplicity, shall resist the designs of this Enemy. But those who would seek after any other thing, would have a Crafty Eye upon their Neighbour, could refine, dispute upon Formalities, have Reason to fear lest whilst they think to do wisely, they fall not into that which they think to avoid by their subtle and empty Wisdom : From which I pray God to preserve us, and to make us Simple Children, Nourishing us with the Milk of understanding, that is without guile. Amen ! God be with you all : I remain in sincerity

The 15th of  
Nov. 1676.

Your most humble and affectionate  
Servant and Brother in Jesus Christ,  
P. P.



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